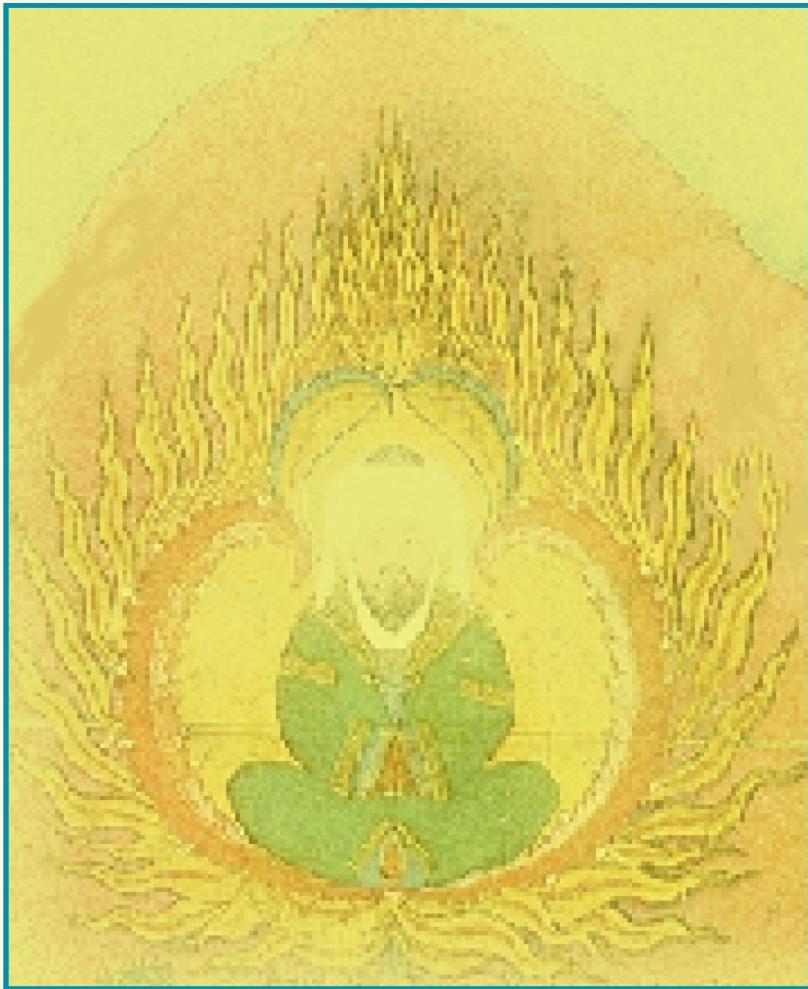


# ابن اهیم ﷺ

# ^Ibrāhīm



*notes for a bayān given at:*

The Islamic Study Center. Charlottesville, Virginia

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*by*

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—————  
ذُو إِذْ أَبْنَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَعْهَنْ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمَنْ ذَرْتَنِي قَالَ لَا يَنْهَا عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

wa <sup>۰</sup>idhī <sup>۱</sup>bā-talā <sup>۰</sup>ibrāhīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin  
fa <sup>۰</sup>atammahunna qala <sup>۰</sup>innī jā <sup>۰</sup>iluka li-n-nasi <sup>۰</sup>imāman  
qāla wa min d̄burriyyatī  
qāla lā yanālū <sup>۰</sup>ahdi-d̄b̄-d̄hālimīn

“And remember that <sup>۰</sup>Ibrāhīm was tried by his Lord  
with certain Commands, which he carried out completely:  
He said: ‘I will make you an <sup>۰</sup>Imām to the Nations.’

He asked:

‘And also from my offspring!’

He answered:

‘My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.’”  
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:124)



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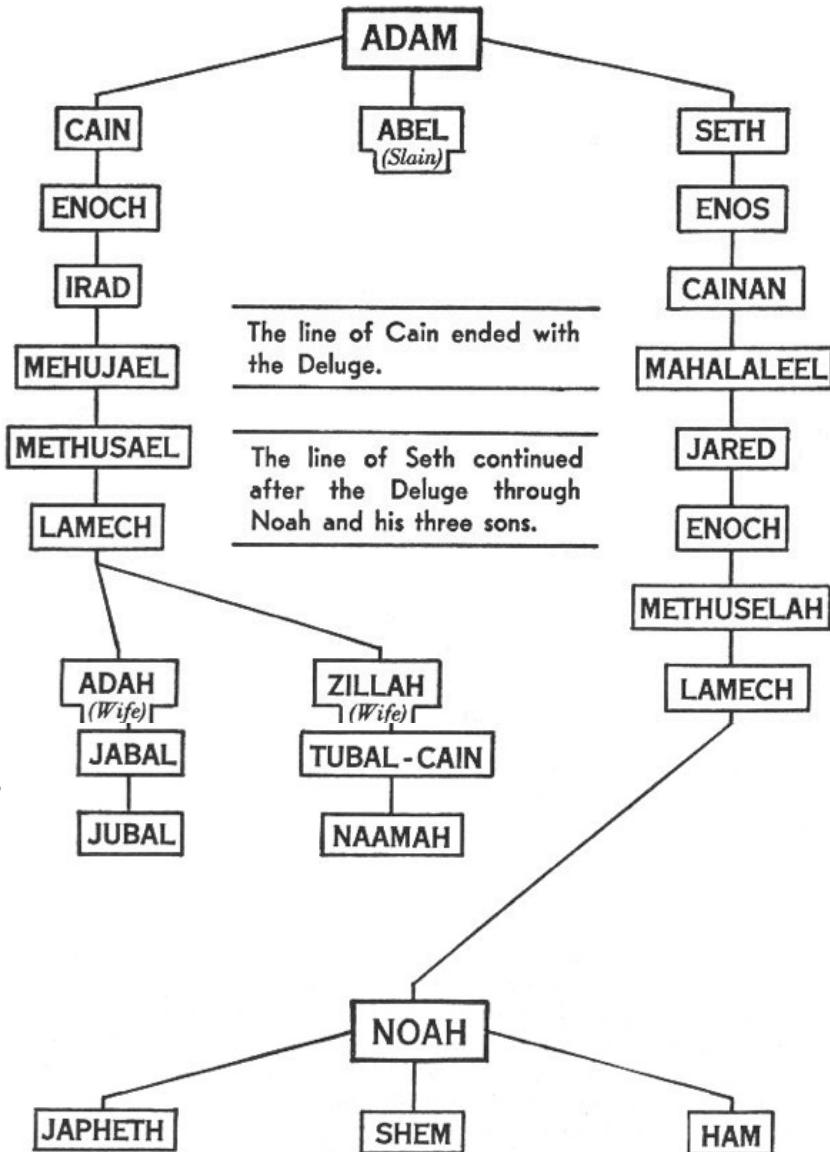


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◦Ādam and Hawā◦ had only one single son: Seth (Hebrew: שְׁתִּים, Arabic: شَيْث Shith meaning: (“placed; appointed”), the rest were all twins who intermarried. The spark that allowed the humans to return to the heavenly realm traveled in the line of Shith ﷺ, who was the inheritor or executor (*wasī* or *wāsiyah* / وَسِيَّة) of ◦Ādam ﷺ.



## <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ

### Further Genealogy:

1. <sup>٢</sup>Ādam ﷺ, lived 930 years and died 216 years before the birth of Nūh ﷺ.
2. Shīth ﷺ is <sup>٢</sup>Ādam's ﷺ only singular son (all the rest of his children were twins), and lived 912 years and knew Nūh ﷺ for 34 years before he died.
3. Methuselah or Ṣalih ﷺ (صَالِحٌ) meaning Pious, is the 4th great grandson of Shīth ﷺ and lived 969 years and knew <sup>٢</sup>Ādam ﷺ 243 years and knew Shīth ﷺ 355 years. The year that Ṣalih ﷺ died, the flood came.
3. Lemech or Lāma<sup>c</sup> (لَامَةٌ) (son of Methuselah or Ṣalih), lived 777 years (died before his father). He is the father of Nūh ﷺ and died 5 years before the flood.
4. Nūh ﷺ lived 950 years. Methuselah/Ṣalih ﷺ knew Nūh ﷺ for 600 years and died the year of the flood. He talked with his father, Lemech, Lāma<sup>c</sup>, 595 years.
5. Shām or Sām (Hebrew: שָׁם, Arabic: شَامٌ) was the believing son of Nūh ﷺ (and father of all Semites), lived 600 years and talked with Methuselah/Ṣalih ﷺ 98 years. He lived after the flood 502 years.
6. The prophet Hūd ﷺ (هُودٌ), also called Abīr, Eber or Heber (great-grandson of Shām/Sām and father of the Hebrews), lived 464 years and knew both Nūh ﷺ and Sām.
7. Terah who in the Qur'ān is called Azar (Surah 6.74), (the great grandson 3 times removed of Eber or Hūd ﷺ), lived 205 years. He was 130 years old when <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm (ابراهيم) was born and talked both with Nūh ﷺ and with Shām/Sām.
8. <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ (originally Abrām son of Terah) lived 175 years. <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ knew Shām/Sām son of Nūh ﷺ (Noah) for 150 years. Nūh ﷺ died 2 years before <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was born.
9. <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ had two sons who became prophets. <sup>٤</sup>Ismā'īl (إِسْمَاعِيلٌ), his first born of Hājar, and his second <sup>٥</sup>Ishāq (إِسْحَاقٌ), born of Sarah. The prophet Lūt (لوت) was his nephew and was one of the people who migrated along with <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ out of their community in Babylon. They are all descendants of Nūh ﷺ through his son Shām or Sām (above).



لِشَّهْدَةِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْمُجْدِ

وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَدِيقًا نَّبِيًّا

wa-◦d̄hkur fi-l-kitābi ◦ibrāhīma ◦innahu kāna ṣiddīqan-nabiyyā  
Mention in the Book –◦Ibrāhīm – He was a man of truth, a prophet.  
(Sūrah Maryam 19:41)

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودَيًا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا  
وَلِكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

mā kāna ◦Ibrāhīmu yahūdiyyan wa lā nasrāniyyan  
wa lākin kāna ḥanīfan musliman wa mā kāna mina-l-mushrikīn  
◦Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian,  
but a man of pure natural belief – a Muslim – and not of the idolaters.  
(Sūrah ◦Āl ◦Imrān 3:67)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنْ دِينًا مِنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَأَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا  
وَأَخْذَلَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَرِيلًا

wa man ◦ahsanu dīnan mimman ◦aslama wajhahu li-llāhi  
wa huwa muhsinun wa ◦ittaba◦a millata ◦Ibrāhīma ḥanīfan  
wa ◦ittakħadħa-llahu ◦Ibrāhīma kħalilā

Who could have a better religion (*dīn*)

than one who surrenders completely to Allah and is a doer of good,  
and follows the religion of ◦Ibrāhīm, a man of pure natural belief?

And Allāh took ◦Ibrāhīm as an intimate friend.

(Sūratu-n-Nisā◦ 4:125)

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَى إِنِّي رَبِّي إِلَى صَرِاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينِي حَنِيفٌ وَمَا كَانَ  
مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

qul ◦innanī hadānī rabbī ◦ilā širātin mustaqīmin dīnan qiyaman  
millata ◦Ibrāhīma ḥanīfan wa mā kāna mina-l-mushrikīn

Say:

“My Lord has guided me to a straight path, a well-founded *dīn*,  
the religion of ◦Ibrāhīm, a man of pure natural belief.

He was not one of the idolaters.”

(Sūratu-l-◦An◦am 6:161)



In the time of the youth of Prophet <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, idolatry and corruption were widespread. In this time people used to worship idols made out of wood and stone representing the sun, the moon, the stars and natural phenomena. Some even worshipped their own rulers. Indeed in the days of Ibrāhīm's youth ﷺ, Babylon was being ruled by a most evil king whose name was Nimrod from whom, due to his practice of magic (*sihr/سحر*), many *harām* activites became prevalant. The people of Babylon literally worshipped Nimrod. Anyone who refused to believe in the gods or refused to worship Nimrod was put to death. Ignorance prevailed in the minds of the people. The priests were astronomers and maintained the records of the movements of the planets to support their practice of astrology. As priests of the state religion they enjoyed a prominent place in the society and were paid well by the state. Few of the people had little or any knowledge of Allāh ﷺ and His teachings that had been brought and taught by Nuh ﷺ and his son Shām.

The Prophet <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was the son of Terah, whose surname was Azar (6:74). His mother was Amatlāh from the city of Cutha in Mesopotamia. However many of genealogists, including Ibn Abbas, suggest that Azar was the name of the idol his father worshipped and he was called after it. Ibn Jarir says: "The correct opinion is that his name was Azar and he probably had two names. One of them is his name and the other is his nickname." There are also those who say that the real father of <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was a pastoralist (*bedu*) and that he had sent his son to live in the city of Babylon to learn a trade, which in the course of events, led to his being apprenticed to Azar who was an idol maker and a staunch worshipper of idols. The chief reason for this alternative view is that from the view of prophetic lineage, it is not conceivable that the father of <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ would be a maker and worshipper of idols, as the Prophet ﷺ said that the essence of his existence was transmitted and ultimately conveyed to his parents through a pure, holy and sanctified progeny. Others, for much the same reaons, say that Azar was his uncle – a citified member of the tribe who made his living as an idol maker.

In any case we know from Qur'ān that this Azar did all he could to compel <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ to worship these artifacts, which he refused to do as he found the idea of worshipping idols which could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, absurd. He told people it was Allāh ﷺ Who gave them all the things they possessed and warned them of their meeting with Him and told, Azar, that he was mistaken:

وَادْقَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ آزَارَ أَتَنْخَذُ أَصْنَامًا لَّهُ<sup>ا</sup>

إِنِّي أَرَاكُ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

wa-<sup>ٰ</sup>dħ qāla <sup>ٰ</sup>ibrāhīmu li-abīhi āzarāā

<sup>ٰ</sup>atattakħidħu <sup>ٰ</sup>aṣnāman <sup>ٰ</sup>āālihatan

<sup>ٰ</sup>innī <sup>ٰ</sup>arāka wa qawmaka fī dalālin mubīn

“Remember when <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm said to his father, Azar,

“Do you take idols as gods?

I see that you and your people are clearly misguided.”

(Sūratu-l-<sup>ٰ</sup>Anām 6:74)

In any case, <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ continued to work in the workshop or factory of Azar until finally he reached a point where it was just too absurd and ultimately debasing and he felt we would be a hypocrite if he were to continue on with business as usual.

So one day when everyone had gone somewhere else he took an axe and destroyed all of the idols except the largest one, in whose arms he put the axe. When everybody returned they found that every idol had been utterly destroyed.

This created a huge furore and anger especially on the part of Azar who immediately demanded to know how this had happened.

<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, no doubt all sweetness and light, told him that obviously since the axe was in the hands of the biggest idol that it was, “The Big One who had done it!” at which point Azar told him not to be absurd. “These things have no power to do anything, We carve them and they are but the work of our hands.” <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ then said, (words to the effect), “So why in the world do you worship that which can neither harm you or do anything in Truth.”

These words acted as signal to Azar and his fellow workmen and they immediately rounded on <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ from whom, no doubt, they had previously heard him voice doubts and accused him of destroying the idols and, importantly, their means of livelihood.

“Then he said to his father and his people: ‘So then what are these images to which you are so devoted?’ They replied: ‘We found our fathers worshipping them.’ He said: ‘Then you as well as your fathers are clearly in error.’ They said: ‘Is it really the truth you have brought us or are you joking?’ He said: No! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; He brought them into existence and I am of those who bear witness to this!” (Sūratu-l-<sup>ٰ</sup>Ambiyāā 21: 53-58)

Characteristically, idolaters attach more importance to other beings than to Allāh ﷺ, and they fear them more than they fear Allah ﷺ. One would be mistaken in limiting the beings valued by these people merely to the statues they carved out of wood or stone.

Loving and valuing another person more than Allāh ﷺ, preferring that person's contentment over the approval of Allāh ﷺ or fearing that person more than Allāh ﷺ is also a form of idolatry. There were also those among the people of ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ who loved and prized the skillful products of their own hands more than Allāh ﷺ.

However on the Day of Rising, such people will finally understand that there is no power other than Allāh ﷺ and will see that the idols and beings, not to mention the products of other people's hands (cars, houses, furniture, jewelry, clothing, etc.), they valued higher than Allāh ﷺ, are merely weak servants before His might and do not actually deserve to be valued at all.

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا الْخَدْمَةُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا نَأْمُوذُ لَهُ يَنْكِرُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ كُلُّ  
بَعْضٍ كَمَا يُعْصِي وَيَأْعُزُ بَعْضًا وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسُ إِلَّا كُلُّهُمْ نَاصِرُينَ

wa qala 'innamā 'ittakħadħtum min dūni-llāhi  
 'awthānan mawaddata baynikum fi-l-hayāti-d-dunyā  
 thumma yawma-l-qiyāmati yakfuru ba-dukum bi-ba-din  
 wa yal-anu ba-dukum ba-ḍan

wa ma-wākumu-n-nāru wa mā lakum min nāṣirīn

He said, “You have adopted idols apart from Allah  
 but your love of them will last only in this life.

Then on the Day of Rising you will reject and curse one another.

The Fire will be your shelter. You will have no helpers.””

(Sūratu-l-Añkabūt 29:25)

So although he lived among a people who worshipped idols, by the workings of his own conscience ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ came to know and understand that Allāh ﷺ was the one and only true G-d. He believed in, and turned to, Allāh ﷺ alone.

Around this time (though some say this happened later) he had a profound experience which caused to forever turn his back on idolatry, earthly or heavenly, and put him on the track to Allāh ﷺ.

He was in the desert at night with a wise man some called the Righteous King (Malik Sadiq/ملک سادق malkh-i-sidaq/) though the Babylonian Talmud says the name (מלך צדק) is a nickname of Shām, the son of Nūh ﷺ and father of the Semitic peoples.

Some Jewish sources say this happened much later outside of Jerusalem when, Melchizedek his teacher who was indeed Shām, was 465 years old whilst at that time <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was 75 years of age. In any case, regardless of the *when* of the story, what happened during their meeting finally tipped him completely over the edge into becoming a true and certain believer (*mu'min*) in Allāh ﷺ and what is of interest to us in terms of our understanding of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ is related in the following <sup>ٰ</sup>āyat from the Qur'ān:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَرَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُلْكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَيَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّانِينِ •  
 فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أَحِبُّ الْأَفْلَئِينَ •  
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ يَازِغَ عَلَى الْقَمَرِ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ  
 قَالَ لَئِنْ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَا كُوْنَنَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الرَّاضِلِينَ •  
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ يَازِغَ عَلَى الْقَمَرِ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا  
 فَلَّتْ قَالَ بِاقْرَأْ مِنْيَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ كَوْنَ

wa kadhalika nurī <sup>ٰ</sup>ibrāhīm malakūta-s-samāwatī wa-l-<sup>ٰ</sup>arḍī  
 wa liyakūna mina-l-mūqinīn •

fa lammā janna <sup>ٰ</sup>alayhi allaylu ra<sup>ٰ</sup> kawkaban qāla hadha rabbī  
 fa lammā afala qāla la <sup>ٰ</sup>uh<sup>ٰ</sup>ibbu-l-<sup>ٰ</sup>aāfilin •

fa lammā ra<sup>ٰ</sup>-l-qamara bāzighān qāla hādha rabbā fa lammā afala  
 qāla la-in lam yahdinī rabbī laakūnanna mina-l-qawmi-d-dallīn •

fa lammā ra<sup>ٰ</sup>-sh<sup>ٰ</sup>-shamsa bāzighatan qāla hādha rabbī  
 hādha <sup>ٰ</sup>akbaru fa lammā afalat qāla  
 yā qawmi <sup>ٰ</sup>innī bari<sup>ٰ</sup>ūn mimmā tushrikūn •

“And thus We gave <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm [his first] insight  
 into the mighty dominion [of Allāh] over the heavens and the earth -  
 so that he might become one of those who are inwardly sure.

When the night grew dark he saw a star. He said: ‘This is my Lord.’

But when it set, he said: ‘I love not things that set.’”

And when he saw the moon rise, he exclaimed: ‘This is my Lord.’

But when it set, he said: ‘Unless my Lord guide me,  
 I surely shall become one of the those who are astray.’

When he saw the sun rise in its resplendence, he said:  
 “This is surely my Lord – this is the greatest of them all.”

But the sun also set, and (<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm) said:

‘Oh my people, I am through with those you associate (with Allāh).’”

(Suratu-l-An<sup>ٰ</sup>am 6:75-78)



Certainly there is an important lesson for believers to learn from the story of <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, which is that one can surely and easily (if one is open to seeing and understanding) grasp the existence of Allāh by ‘reading’ the Holy Book of Nature (*qur’ān takwini*).

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْلَافِ اللَّيلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
وَالنُّفُكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ  
فَأَخْيَابِ الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبِثَفَّاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَانِةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّياحِ  
وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخِّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لِقَاتِلِ قُوَّمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

<sup>٣</sup>inna fī khalqi-s-samāwātī wa-l-arḍī wa <sup>٣</sup>khtilā fi-lhayli wa-n-nahārī  
wa-l-fulki allatī tajrī ī-l-bahri bimā yanfa٤u-n-nāsa  
wa mā <sup>٣</sup>ānzala-llāhu mina-s-samā٥i mim-mā-in  
fāhŷā bihi-l-arḍa ba٦da mawtihā wa batḥtha fīhā min kulli dābbatin  
wataṣrī٧-r-riyāhi wa-s-sahābi-l-musakhkharī  
bayna-s-samā٨i wa-l-arḍi la āyātin li-qawmin ya٩qilūn

In the creation of the heavens and earth,  
and the alternation of the night and day,  
and the ships which sail the seas to the benefit of people,  
and the water which Allāh sends down from the sky  
by which He brings the earth to life when it was dead  
and scatters about in it creatures of every kind  
and the varying direction of the winds,  
and the clouds subservient between heaven and earth,  
there are Signs for people who use their intellect.

(Sūrah-l-Baqara 2:164)

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْلَافِ اللَّيلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لِآيَاتٍ لَّا يَرَوْنَ الْأَلْبَابِ

<sup>٣</sup>inna fī khalqi-s-samāwātī wa-l-<sup>٣</sup>arḍī  
wa <sup>٣</sup>khtilāfi-l-hayli wa-n-nahāri la <sup>٣</sup>āyātin lī <sup>٣</sup>uli-l-bāb  
Truly in the creation of the heavens and the earth  
and in the alternation of the night and the day are signs  
for the people of understanding.  
[lī <sup>٣</sup>ulu-l-l-bāb or the people of the gate]

(Sūrah <sup>٣</sup>Al 'Imrān 3:190)



In the Written Qur'an (*qur'ān tadrīsī*) there are thousands of signs for the one who can see, and reading the book of Allāh ﷺ is a means of getting closer to Allāh ﷺ and strengthening our *dīn*. For anyone who studies the Qur'an in a sincere manner will eventually wind up in surrender to Allāh ﷺ and develop *Taqwā* (G-d Consciousness), for this is the natural result of studying the Qur'an. Similarly if we look around us and read the signs of Allāh ﷺ in the creation we see the incredible perfection of this world, and we know that the chance of such perfection being created by chance or trial and error or random happenings is as likely as a tornado hitting a junk yard and creating a Boeing 747.

Some examples of the signs:

There is a bird called the Bar-tailed Godwit that migrates from Alaska to New Zealand, a 5,000 mile journey. The bird flies 9 days and 9 nights, regardless of snow, rain, hail, thunder or whatever.

It crosses oceans, cities, forests, deserts and faces extreme cold and heat. But still it keeps going. It flies more than 390 miles a day, with no food or water or sleep for 12 days and nights.

How?

Another bird, the Bar-headed Goose, also comes from Alaska; it flies straight up and enters the jet stream, a current of air that flows around the world at 1000 miles a day. The bird rides it all the way to Florida at a height of some 33,000 feet, at -59 Celsius!

At that level oxygen is practically non-existent, but yet the bird can survive and breathe with next to no oxygen.

How?

Or take the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. It is a tiny bird, it weighs 4 grams (a teaspoon of sugar weighs 5 grams).

It migrates all the way from South-America to the banks of the Mississippi. It goes straight across the gulf of Mexico, 600 miles, and does it within 26 hours.

So the sun rises and the bird takes off, it flies over open ocean as were it to land on the water it would become fish food. The bird keeps going and going, it goes during the morning, afternoon, evening, night and eventually another day comes and it reaches its destination. All of this is done without losing direction or energy,

How?

Do you really think that Allāh ﷺ cannot feed those birds in their own country and has them fly thousands of miles just for food?

No, rather it's a way for Him to show us His greatness, awesome creative abilities and His signs. For as Allāh ﷺ says:

أَلَمْ يُرِقُ إِلَى الطَّيْرَ فَوْهِ مِنْ صَافَاتٍ وَيَبْصُرُ  
مَا يُسِكِّنُ لِلْأَرْضَ حَنْدَنْ بَكْلَ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ

<sup>9</sup>awa lam yaraw <sup>9</sup>ila-t-ṭayri fawqahum sāāaffātin wa yaqbidnā mā yumsikuhunna <sup>9</sup>illa-r-rahmānu <sup>9</sup>innahu bi-kulli shay'īn bāṣir

Have they not looked at the birds above them,  
with wings outspread and folded back?

Nothing holds them up but the All-Merciful. He sees all things.  
(Sūratu-l-Mulk 67:19)

Everywhere one looks, one can readily see the innumerable signs of the conscious purposeful focused creation of Allāh ﷺ. Even if one does not have any knowledge or has not been given any advice, one with careful study can clearly conclude that there is a Creator of the universe just by giving the matter his earnest consideration, even if it is only for a few minutes. One can grasp the power and greatness of Allāh ﷺ and the fact that Allāh ﷺ rules over everything. This is how <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, who had probably not been communicated with earlier, grasped the existence and sublimity of Allāh ﷺ through sincere and conscientious reflection on the examples that were set forth by the wise teacher Malik Sadiq when he invited <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ to contemplate the desert night sky.

When he looked carefully the Truth was clear to him. From then on, he told his people that he separated himself from the false gods they worshipped including the 'king':

إِنِّي وَجَهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْكِنِ  
<sup>9</sup>innī wajjahtu wajhiya li-lladhī faṭara-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍa ḥanīfan  
wa mā <sup>9</sup>anā min al-mushrikīn

I have turned my face to the One  
Who brought the heavens and earth into being,  
[I am] a pure natural believer — I am not one of the idolators.  
(Sūratu-l-An'ām, 79)

This inevitably led to a clash between <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ and the king of Babylonia – Nimrod – and a final showdown where Nimrod told <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ that if he were to refuse to worship him he would be cast into the fire. The following version of the Abram (then his name in Jewish scripture) vs. Nimrod confrontation appears in the *Midrash Raba*, a major compilation of Jewish Scriptural exegesis.

The part relating to Genesis, in which this appears (Chapter 38, 13), is considered to date from the sixth century.

נָטוּ וְמִסְרוּ לְנִמְרוֹד. אָמֵר לוֹ: עֲבֹד לְאָשׁ. אָמֵר לוֹ אֶבְרָהָם: וְאַעֲבֹד  
לְמִים, שְׁמַכְבִּים אֶת הָאֵשׁ? אָמֵר לוֹ נִמְרוֹד: עֲבֹד לְמִים! אָמֵר לוֹ: אִם  
כֵּךְ, אַעֲבֹד לְעָנוֹן, שְׁנוֹשָׂא אֶת הַמִּים? אָמֵר לוֹ: עֲבֹד לְעָנוֹן! אָמֵר לוֹ:  
אִם כֵּךְ, אַעֲבֹד לְרוֹחַ, שְׁמַפְזּוֹת עֲנָנִים? אָמֵר לוֹ: עֲבֹד לְרוֹחַ! אָמֵר לוֹ:  
וְנַעֲבֹד לְבָנְ אָדָם, שְׁסֻבֵּל הַרוֹחּוֹת? אָמֵר לוֹ: מִילִים אַתָּה מִכְבֵּר, אַנְיָ  
אַיִן מִשְׁתְּחֹווֹ אֶלָּא לְאוֹר - הָרוֹי אַנְיָ מִשְׁלִיכֵךְ בְּתוּכוֹ, וַיַּבְאֵלָלוֹ  
שַׁאתָה מִשְׁתְּחֹווֹ לוֹ וַיַּצְלֵךְ הַיָּמָנוֹ הִיה שֵׁם הַרְןּוּ עוֹמֵד. אָמֵר: מַה  
נִפְשָׁךְ, אִם יִנְצַח אֶבְרָהָם - אָוּמֵר 'מִשְׁלֵ אֶבְרָהָם אַנְיָ', וְאִם יִנְצַח נִמְרוֹד  
- אָוּמֵר 'מִשְׁלֵ נִמְרוֹד אַנְיָ'. כִּיוֹן שִׁירַד אֶבְרָהָם לְכַבֵּשׁ הַאֲשׁ וְנוֹיצָול,  
אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִשְׁלֵ מִי אַתָּה? אָמֵר לָהֶם: מִשְׁלֵ אֶבְרָהָם אַנְיָ! נְטוּלָהוּ  
וְהַשְּׁלִיכָהוּ לְאוֹר, וְנַחֲמַרְוּ בְנֵי מְעוּיוֹ וַיַּצָּא וְמַת עַל פָּנֵי תְּרַח אָבִיו. וְכֵךְ  
נָאֵמֶר: וַיָּמָת הַרְןּוּ עַל פָּנֵי תְּרַח אָבִיו. (בראשית ר'בָה ל"ח, יג)

He [Abraham] was given over to Nimrod. [Nimrod] told him: ‘Worship the Fire!’ Abraham said to him: ‘Shall I then worship the water, which puts off the fire?’ Nimrod told him: ‘Worship the water!’ [Abraham] said to him: ‘If so, shall I worship the cloud, which carries the water?’ [Nimrod] told him: ‘Worship the cloud!’ [Abraham] said to him: ‘If so, shall I worship the wind, which scatters the clouds?’ [Nimrod] said to him: ‘Worship the wind!’ [Abraham] said to him: ‘And shall we worship the human, who withstands the wind?’ Said [Nimrod] to him: ‘You pile words upon words, I bow to none but the fire – in it shall I throw you, and let the Deity to whom you bow come and save you from it!’

Haran [Abraham’s brother] was standing there. He said [to himself]: what shall I do? If Abraham wins, I shall say: ‘I am of Abraham’s [followers]’, if Nimrod wins I shall say ‘I am of Nimrod’s [followers]’. When Abraham went into the furnace and survived, Haran was asked: ‘Whose [follower] are you?’ and he answered: “I am Abraham’s!”. [Then Nimrod’s men] took him and threw him into the furnace, and his belly opened and he died and predeceased Terah, his father.

In the Qur’ān the story is related in a different manner tho the outcome is the same.

When, as we related above, that when <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ had destroyed the idols his fellow workers were furious and demanded that <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ be arrested.

<sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ did not resist; this was precisely what he had been aiming for, so that he could bring about a showdown.

When he was brought before the king (Nimrod) he was asked if he were responsible for breaking the idols. Once again he told them they should ask the biggest idol since it was he who was found with the axe and obviously must be the culprit! They all said that he knew well that idols could not speak or move. This gave <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ the chance to prove the foolishness of worshipping these lifeless objects and the utter senselessness of their beliefs; however, their arrogance would not allow them to admit their foolishness. All they could do was to use their power of authority to punish <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ. With anger burning in their hearts, they decided to throw <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ into the biggest fire they could build and the people were ordered to gather wood as a service to their gods.

Next they dug a deep pit, filled it with firewood and lit it and then they brought a catapult with which to cast <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ into the fire. <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was put on the catapult, his hands and feet were tied. The fire was ready with its flame reaching the sky and the chief priest gave his order to cast <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ into the fire.

As this moment the angel Jibrīl ﷺ came near to him and asked: “Oh <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ do you wish for anything?” To which <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ replied: “There is nothing I need from you – Allāh will suffice.”

The catapult was released and <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was cast into the fire. But his descent into the blaze was as a descent on steps in a cool garden. The flames were still there, but they did not burn, for Allāh ﷺ the Almighty had issued this command:

قُلْنَا لِبَانَ رُكْوَنِي بَرَدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ

qulnā yā nāru kūnī bardan wa-salāman <sup>ٰ</sup>alā <sup>ٰ</sup>ibrāhīm

We said: O fire, be coolness and peace for <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm  
(Sūratu-l-Ambiyā<sup>ٰ</sup> 21:69)

The fire submitted to the Will of Allāh ﷺ, becoming cool and safe for <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ. He sat in the midst of the fire as if he were sitting in a garden. There was no space in him for fear or worry. Fear and awe were dead, and the fire was turned into coolness, making the air pleasant and refreshing. Those who love Allāh ﷺ as <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ do not fear, for as Allāh ﷺ has said:

لَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُنَّ مُخْرَجُونَ

<sup>ٰ</sup>alāā <sup>ٰ</sup>inna <sup>ٰ</sup>awliyā-llahi lā khawfun <sup>ٰ</sup>alayhim wa la hum yaḥzanūn

“Surely, the friends of Allāh  
will feel no fear and will know no sorrow.”  
(Sūrah Yunus 10:62)

After this it was clear that ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ could no longer remain with his father and he resolved to leave both his work and his home, but not before making one final attempt to convince his father, saying;

بِالْأَبْتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءْنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا تَرَكْتَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِّيًّا

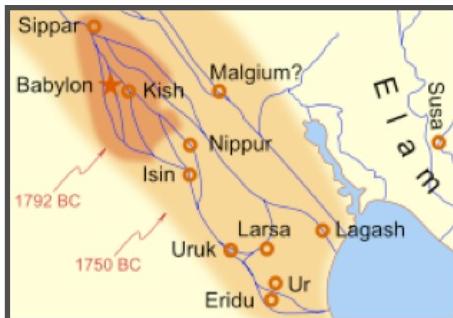
yā ◦abati <sup>3</sup>innī qadā jā<sup>3</sup>anī mina-l-<sup>c</sup>ilmi  
mā lam ya<sup>◦</sup>tika fa<sup>◦</sup>ttabi<sup>◦</sup>nī ahdika širātan sawiyyā

“Oh my father, knowledge has come to me which never reached you,  
so follow me and I will guide you to the right path.”

(Sūrah Maryam 19:43)

His father rejected his call and When ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ realized that no one else was going to believe his words he decided to emigrate. He left his people and first traveled with his cousin Lūt ﷺ to a city to the south of Babylon the south called Ur

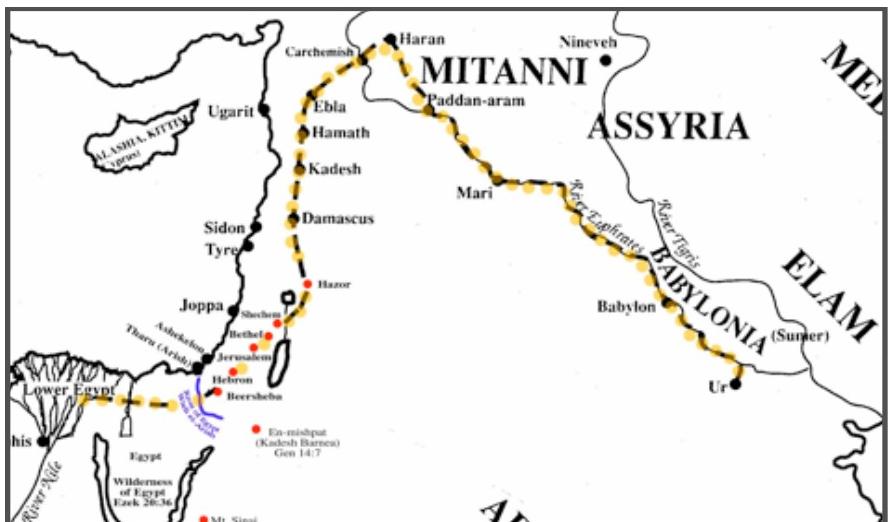
Ur 012 013 014 015 016 was an important Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia located at the site of modern Tell el-Muqayyar in <sup>◦</sup>Irāq’s Dhi-l-Qar Governorate. Once a coastal city near the mouth of the Euphrates on the Persian Gulf, Ur is now well inland, south of the Euphrates on its right bank. Many scholars believe that Ur was the original birthplace of ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ.



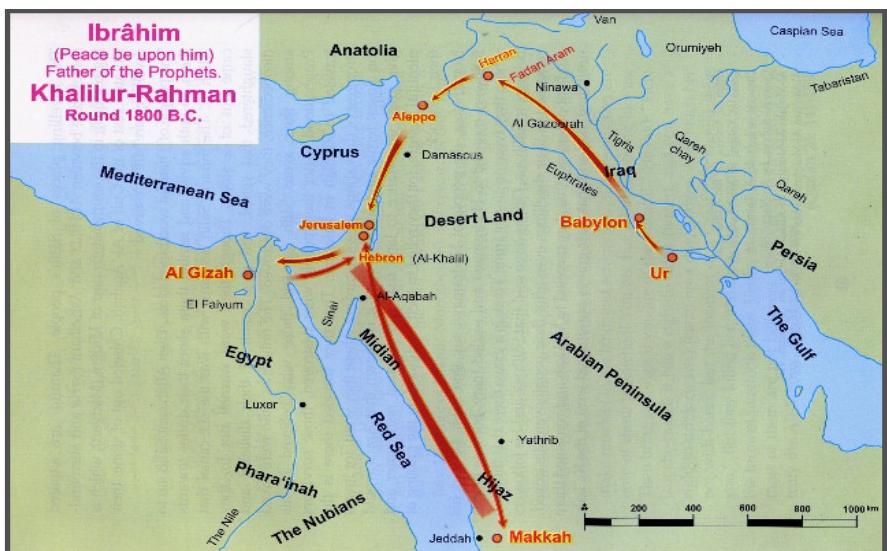
He did not however stay in Ur, but soon left for Harran which could be reached by following the Tigris directly north. Further it was directly linked to Nineveh in the east and from there to Sham (Syria) and, then south to what is now Palestine and its capital city, the present day Quds ash-Sharīf, and from there south east to Egypt. This was to be the life changing route that ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ finally took but not after a stay in Harran where he found his wife, Sarai.

Harran, built by Nimrod, was the chief home of the Mesopotamian moon god Sīn, under the Assyrians and Neo-Babylonians/Chaldeans and remained so even unto Roman times.

<sup>o</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ



Travels of <sup>o</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ before and after the birth of <sup>o</sup>Isma'īl ﷺ



12.1-3 “And Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Leave your country and your kinsfolk, and your father’s house, for the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”

'Leave — for a land that I will show you.' <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ (then, as m, called Abram) is called to venture into the unknown. The way ahead will be revealed to him as he takes the path of obedience. His part is to trust and obey. This decision will determine his ﷺ whole destiny. Indeed it will determine the destiny of the world.

Allāh ﷺ does not hold back on what is being demanded. It is spelled out clearly. He must leave his land, but in return he is promised that he ﷺ will become 'a great nation' and experience the special protection of Allāh ﷺ. He is to become 'a blessing'. Indeed the whole earth will be blessed through what Allāh ﷺ does through him. He must leave a land to receive a land. He must leave kinsfolk in order to become part of a great nation. He must leave his close family so that all the world might become his family. This is the covenant (*ahd*) of Allāh ﷺ. Obey, he is told, and you will receive over flowing abundance. And Abram believes and obeys.

In Harran, from which many of the wives of the early prophets came, he meets the woman, Sarai (later Sarah), who is to become his wife and his life partner.

Harran was also the home of Laban brother of Rebekah daughter of Bethuel, wife of Isaac (<sup>ٰ</sup>Ishāq / إِسْحَاق / ), who gave birth to a set of twins, Esau (Al Eis) and Jacob (Ya<sup>c</sup>qub / يَعْقُوب / ), who later was called Israel (Isrā<sup>c</sup>il / إِسْرَائِيل / ). Ya<sup>c</sup>qub ﷺ later spent twenty years in Harran working for his uncle Laban and finally married two of Laban's daughters Leah and Rachel (as well as two of their servants or hand maidens) Rachel was the mother of both the Prophet Yusūf ﷺ who was sold into slavery in Egypt (Mizraim) by his ten older half brothers and his younger full brother, Ibn Yamīn (Benjamin).

All-in-all a very complicated story and it was from all of this that came the 12 tribes of <sup>ٰ</sup>Isma<sup>c</sup>il ﷺ, the first born son of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ through his wife Hājar who was originally the servant of Sarai in Egypt, and the 12 tribes of Israel who derive from the prophet <sup>ٰ</sup>Ishāq ﷺ, his second born son who was borne by Sarai when both <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Sarai were of an advanced age. More of this later.

To the skeptics and the cynics who do not think much of what they often disdainfully refer to as "Bible History" which they take to somehow be a fabricated and second rate form of the real *History*. To such a person I would say look at the present political situation, prevailing in the world, especially that of the Middle East, in which this story is still working its way through and which shows every sign and possibility of ending with a bang rather than a whimper.

## ◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ

In any case <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Sarai left Harran when he was seventy five and made their way first to Palestine and its capital city – Salem. And it is here, according to many scholars that <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ came into contact with the Righteous King of Salem (Malik Sadiq/ מלכי-צדקה malkh-i-sīdaq/) who revealed the whole story of the stars, the moon and the sun though other scholars say this meeting was earlier with a desert wise man of the same name who taught <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ the truth of the One El(llah) and the lie of idolatry which allowed him to see thought the myth of the idol factory.



(places in Palestine connected with <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ)

It was in Palestine that Yahweh appeared to Abram (<sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ) and said, “To your progeny I will give this land. And there he built an altar to Yahweh who appeared to him.”” (Genesis 12:7)

וַיַּרְא יְהוָה אֶל־אֶבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא רֹעֵן אַתָּה אַתָּה  
הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת תִּזְבֹּן שֶׁמֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לִיהְוָה הַנְּגָה אֲלֵינוּ:

This is the first theophany (awesome experience of G-d or El) received by Abram in the land of Palestine. It confirms that he had finally arrived at the place to which El(llah) has sent him. This land is the land promised to him, the land that El (llah) would show him

וְאַעֲשֶׂנּוּ לְךָ גָּדוֹל וְאֶבְרָכָךְ וְאֶגְדַּלָּה שְׁמֶךָ וְהִיא בָּרָכָה:

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12.2).

“And he removed from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel (= ‘the house(beth/bayt/بيت) of El(llah), and pitched his tent, having Bethel to the West and Ai to the East.” (Genesis 12:8)

**וַיַּעֲתַק מֵשֶׁם הָהָרָה מִקְדָּם לְבֵית – אֶל נַיְט אֱלֹהָה בֵּית –  
אֶל מִים וְהָעֵד מִקְדָּם וַיַּבְנֵ –  
שֵׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לִיהְוָה וַיַּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְרֻחוֹ:**

“And there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.” The altar would be built of earth for the purpose of offering a burnt offering in gratitude to El(llah). We we are reminded that this word ‘offering’ refers to an act of worship which entails the sacrifice of something living.

**וַיָּסֹעַ אֶבְרָם הָלוֹן וַיַּסְעוּ הַנֶּגֶבָה: פ**

“And Abram journeyed going on towards the Negev.” (Genesis 12:9)

The Negev was the semi-aridic southern highland ideal for grazing sheep, sloping southward between what would be, in time, his final resting place, al-Khalil (الخليل) (Hebron/حَبْرُون) and Bir Sab'a (Seven Wells), the southernmost part of the ‘promised’ land. <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ has now passed through the whole of the land, surveying it in the name of the Lord, El(llah), and seeking pasture. The Negev was to be his new home.(As a side note the route taken by <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ also fits in with what we know of the people from this period, who kept to the hills and avoided the cities of the coastal plain.

**וַיְהִי רָעַב בָּאָרֶץ וַיַּרְא אֶבְרָם מִצְרַיִם מִצְרָיִם לְגֹור שֵׁם כִּי –  
כִּי בְּכָד הַרְעָב בָּאָרֶץ:**

“And there came a famine in the land, and Abram went down into *Ægypt* (Miṣr/مصر/Mizraim/מצרים) to sojourn there, for the famine was sore on the land.’ (Genesis 12.10 )

It is clear that by this time Abram has been some time in the land and, as it is well known, from time to time the rains fail and results in severe famine. As such the Holy Land was always vulnerable to famine because it was so totally dependent on rain, so Abram makes for *Ægypt*.

Because of the Nile, which overflowed its banks seasonally and kept the ground well watered, *Ægypt* was usually protected from the worst aspects of famine, although, rarely, they did happen even there as we know from the story of Yūsuf and the seven lean and seven fat years. We also know that people often sought refuge in *Ægypt* at such times and were accepted by the people of *Ægypt* who were (and are) well known for their generosity to those in need regardless of their own state and situation.

As with much of the narrative it reads as though Abram were almost on his own, but it is commonplace in ancient literature to depict the activity of a group in terms of its leader unless there is an intention to make a specific impression. But whilst the narrative refers mainly speaks of Abram it is well known that he was a leader or tribal chief of those who travelled with him, including his cousin Lot (Lūt ﷺ) also a sub cheiftan under Abram.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־  
שָׂרֵי אֲשֶׁר־  
הָנָה – נָא יְצַעַתִּי כִּי אִשָּׁה יִפְתַּח –

מִרְאָה אַתָּה: וְהִיא כִּי – יְרָא אֶת־  
הַמִּצְרִים וְאָמַרְוּ אֲשֶׁר־  
וְהָרְגָו אֶתִּי וְאֶתְךָ יְהִי: 13 אָמַרְתִּי – נָא אֶחֱתִּי אַתָּה לִמְעָן יִטְבֶּל –  
לִי בְּעִזּוֹר וְחִימָה נְפָשִׁי בְּגַלְלָךְ:

“And it happened that when he was on the verge of entering Egypt he said to Sarai his wife, ‘Look now, I know that you are a very beautiful woman. And when the Ægyptians see you they will say ‘this is his wife’, and they will kill me and keep you alive. I beg you, say you are my sister so that it may be well with me for your sake, and that my soul may live because of you’”. (Genesis 12. 11-13)

Sarai’s beauty must have been exceptionally outstanding for Abram to have this fear, for he would have had his retainers with him. Abram had nothing to judge the Egyptians by except hearsay for he knew nothing about Ægypt save that it was a powerful nation and famine would have left him and his those with him somewhat weak and frail for they, after all, were coming to beg for help.

Furthermore we learn later that this habit of describing Sarai as his sister was a policy he had settled on long before when he first ‘left his father’s house’ (20.13). The statement was true in terms of those days. She was in fact his half-sister (20.12). In fairness to Abram it must be recognised that while this was undoubtedly because he was concerned for his own life he also has in mind Sarai’s safety. He no doubt thought that if men killed him for his wife, his wife would become their plaything. But if they saw the opportunity of wooing Sarai they might well treat him well with a view to a respectable marriage, giving them the opportunity to move on in safety.

The plan may have worked well elsewhere, but here it misfired. What he could not have foreseen given his lack of knowledge of Ægypt that the policy of the Pharaoh (firawn/فِرْعَوْن) (like many kings) was to have men constantly on the lookout for beautiful women that he might add to his household.

וַיְהִי כִּי-בָא אֶבְרָם מִצְרַיִם וַיַּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרָיִם אֹתָהּ הַאֲשֶׁר כֵּי-  
יְפָה הוּא מְאֽד: וַיַּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פְּרֻעָה וַיַּהֲלֹל אֹתָהּ אֶל-  
פְּרֻעָה וַתִּקְחֵת הַאֲשֶׁר בַּיּוֹתְרָה:

“And it happened that when Abram had arrived in Ægypt the Ægyptians saw that Sarai was indeed very beautiful, and the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh and the woman was taken into the house of Pharaoh.” (Genesis 12.14-15)

The description fits well with what would be expected to happen in a case like this. It bears all the marks of genuineness. First the Egyptians in general begin to praise her beauty, and the word gets around. Then the princes of Pharaoh, always eager to win his favour, would hear about her and have her appraised. Then she is ‘taken into the house of Pharaoh’.

This does not mean that Pharaoh ever saw her. He had many women in his household and she was but one among many. It is however clear, from the account in Genesis, that Abram was respected enough as a petty chief to have her treated properly.

“And he (Pharaoh) treated Abram well for her sake, and he had sheep and oxen and was given asses, and menservants and maidservants, and she both asses and camels.” (Genesis 12:16)

וְלֹא-בָּרָם הַיִּטְבָּרֵךְ וְיִהְיֶה לוֹ צָאן-  
זָבְקָר וְחַמְרִים וְעַבְدִים וְשַׁבְתָת וְאַתָּנָת וְגַמְלִים:

But the size of his ‘household’ was also increased. Many more men now served under him. His power and effectiveness was thus extended.

At some point Pharaoh must have visited the particular palace where Sarai dwelt and some dreadful illness clearly ensued there. Enquiries would then be made as to new arrivals to explain the problem, and diviners would be consulted. The Lord may have spoken to them as he later spoke to the soothsayer Balaam. Certainly in some way they learned the truth about Sarai.

“And Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.” (Genesis 12.17)

וַיַּנְגַּע יְהֹוָה אֹתָהּ פְּרֻעָה נְגָעִים גְּדָלִים וְאֹתָהּ –  
בִּינְטוּ עַל-דָּבָר שְׂרֵי אֲשֶׁת אֶבְרָם:

It is even possible that Abram or one of his servants might have arranged for the news to reach the ear of someone influential. Abram must have been devastated at what had happened and not have known what to do about it.

But when news of the illness in the palace reached him he may have seen it as an opportunity from El(lلāh), and acted. Alternately Sarai may have communicated the message to someone influential in the household of Pharaoh and spoken of what the Lord of Abram would do in the light of the circumstances.

**וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרָעָה לְאַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה – זֶה אֵת עֲשִׂית לִי גַּם־הַנְּאָמָרְתָּ לִי אֲשֶׁר הָאָתָּה הַוָּא: לִמְהָא אָמְרָתָ אַחֲתֵי הַוָּא וְאַקְחָ אָתָּה לִי לְאָשָׁה וְעַתָּה הַנְּגָדָה אֲשֶׁר קָחָ וְלֹךְ: וַיֹּצְאוּ עַלְיוֹ פְּרָעָה אַנְשָׁים וַיִּשְׁלַחְצֵוּ אֲתָּה וְאַתָּה – אֲשֶׁר – לֹךְ:**

“And Pharaoh called Abram and said, ‘What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say ‘she is my sister’. Now therefore here is your wife. Take her and leave.’ And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him, and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.” (Genesis 12.18-20 )

It is clear from the Genesis narrative that whatever the illness was it was sufficient to awe Pharaoh enough to prevent him taking revenge on Abram. Rather than punish him he wants this man with his powerful God to be well out of his way. Pharaoh the god is afraid of Yahweh. There is the specific idea here that Abram was at fault. So Abram is escorted to the frontier and firmly ejected from Egypt. But he is allowed to take his gifts with him.

**וַיַּעֲלֵ אַבְרָם מִמְּצָרִים הַזָּא וְאַשְׁתָּוּ וּכְלָ – אֲשֶׁר – לֹו וְלוֹט עַמּוּדָנֶגֶבָה:**

“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negev.” (Genesis 13.1)

The sentence confirms immediately that Abram had been accompanied by his family tribe and by his nephew. They return to the Negev, to the land that El(lلāh) had promised Abram.

**וְאַבְרָם בָּכְדָמָךְ בָּמְקָנָה בְּכָסֶר וּבְזָהָב:**

“And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold.” (Genesis 13.2)

So his contest with Pharaoh has been to his benefit. We are surely to see that this great wealth is at least partly due to his visit to *Ægypt*. Rather than destroying him it has enriched him, and this can only have been because Yahweh was with him. The mention of silver and gold suggests that Abram whilst in *Ægypt* had engaged in trading as well as his earlier possession of flocks and herds.



וַיֵּלֶךְ לִמְסֻעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד – בֵּית – אֶל עַד – הַמִּקְׁוֹם אֲשֶׁר –  
הַיְהּ שֵׁם [אֲهָלָה כ] (אֲהָלָה ק) בְּתִחְלָה בֵּין בֵּית – אֶל זְבוּן הַעֵד  
“And he went on his journeys from the Negev, even to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at the beginning, and there Abram called on the name of Yahweh.”

Relieved and full of praise in his heart to El(lلāh) for his preservation, Abram takes his tribe back to the cult's altar, and there he leads the tribe in worship. At this stage the area of Bethel is clearly looked on as their permanent ‘home’, in as far as a tribe, whose main activity was herding, and who thus had to continually seek pasturage, could have a permanent home.

This establishes that Abram and his family tribe are now semi-nomads. They make some place their centre but move out from that place to pasture their flocks and herds. They must seek places where there is water. At times they must seek higher ground. When the fields in the lowlands have been harvested they can, by agreement, pasture their flocks on the stubble. At the same time, as we shall see later, they are not averse to planting crops and to some extent settling down. Thus they must remain within touch of civilisation, for cities are built where there is a good supply of water, and fields are usually sown where there are men to eat their produce, and civilisation has much to offer in the way of culture and education. Yet they avoid becoming too involved and they stay away from places where they will not be welcome.

“And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together, for their substance was so great that they could not dwell together.” (Genesis 13.5-6)

וְגַם – לִלוּט הַהְלָךְ אֶת – אֶבְרָם הַיְהּ צָאוֹן – וְבָקָר וְאֲהָלִים: וְלֹא –  
נִשְׂא אֶתְתֶּם הָאָרֶץ לְשִׁבְתָּה יִחְדֹּו כִּי –  
הַיְהּ רְכֹזֶשֶׂם רַב וְלֹא יִכְלֹא לְשִׁבְתָּה יִחְדֹּו:

The riches gathered in Ægypt have altered the situation. There is no longer room for both sub-tribes to stay together.

“And Abram said to Lot, ‘Let there be no strife, I beg you, between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen. For we are close relatives. Is not the whole land in front of you? Separate yourself, I pray, from me. If you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if you take the right hand then I will go to the left’.” (Genesis 13.8-9)

וַיֹּאמֶר אָבָרְם אֶל־לֹוט אֶל־נֵא תְּהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינוּ וּבֵינוּ וְבֵין  
רֹעֵי יְבוּן רֹעֵךְ כִּי אֲנָשִׁים אֲחִים אֲנוּ חָנוּנִים הַלֵּא כִּלְכִילָה לְפָנֶיךָ  
הַפְּנִיד נֵא מַעַלְיָ אָמָן הַשְּׂמָאל וְאַיִמָּנה וְאַם הַיְמָין וְאַשְׁמָאִילָה:  
The greatness of Abram is brought out in these words. As senior, and almost certainly leader of the largest sub-tribe, he could have claimed precedence. But he wants no rancor between them. He is happy for Lot to choose which way to go and then he will take the other. There will be no hard feelings. They are still bound together as close relatives, but they must consider the facts of the situation. It is therefore regrettably necessary for them to separate. Abram trusts in El(Allah) to ensure that they will all end up in the right place.

וַיֹּשֶׁא־לֹוט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־כָּל־כֶּבֶר הַיְرָצֵן בְּכָלָה  
מִשְׁקָה לְפָנֵי שְׁחַת יְהוָה אֶת־סְדָם וְאֶת־עִמְרָה כְּגַן־יְהוָה  
בָּאָרֶץ מִצְבָּים בָּאָכָה צָעָרָה:

"And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the Circle of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yahweh, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar." (Genesis 13.10 )

Lot carries out his research carefully (he could not do this by literally just 'looking up'). He travelled around and weighed up the opportunities. And as he stood in the hills and looked down over the Jordan and its surrounds and saw how well-watered and fruitful the plain was, the Circle of Jordan, with the Jordan running through it, and fed by other rivers, he was impressed. Later this area would become spoiled by salt and bitumen, but at this time it was fair to look at and enticing. All of this he took into consideration, as he began his mission to bring the Message to those who lived there.

"As you go to Zoar', that is in the direction of Zoar, which is at the tip of the Dead Sea as it is after the destruction of the cities."

The land that Lot sees is almost like Eden but there is an ominous shadow of lying over the two cities. It is beautiful, but there is sin in the land that Lot does not yet realise it,

For, even though he is under the protection of Yahweh, he also is thinking in terms of increasing his and his tribes wealth and the land that he sees in front of him is promising if not yet quite promised.

וַיַּבְחַר – לוֹ לֹוט אֶת כָּל –

כֶּבֶר הַיְרָצֵן וַיַּסְع לֹוט מִקְדָּם וַיַּפְרֹדוּ אִישׁ מַעַל אֶחָיו:

"So Lot chose for himself all the Circle of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they (he and his cousin, Ibrāhīm ﷺ) separated themselves, the one from the other."

ויהָה אָמַר אֶל־אֶבְרֹם אֶחָרִי הַפַּרְדֵּס־ לֹוט מַעֲמָנוּ שָׂא נָא עִינֵּינוּ  
וַיַּרְא מִן־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־ אָתָּה שָׁם צָפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְקִדְמָה וְנִמְהָ:  
כִּי אַתָּה בְּלִי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ אָתָּה רֹאָה לֹן אַתְּנָגָה וְלִזְרָעָן עַד־  
עוֹלָם: וְשִׁמְתֵּן אַתָּה זְרָעָן בַּעֲפָר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמָ— יָכוֹל אִישׁ  
לִמְנוֹת אַתָּה— עַפְרָה אָרֶץ גַּם— זְרָעָן יִמְנָה:

“And Yahweh said to Abram after Lot had separated from him, ‘Lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are northward and southward, and eastward and westward. For all the land which you see, to you I will give it and to your children for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can count the dust of the earth then shall your seed also be countable.’ (Genesis 13.14-16 )



I ask the listener/readers indulgence here for this long narrative extracted from the Book of Genesis in the Tanakh (Hebrew: תנ"ך or the Miqra “that which is read”, since, while the story of ’Ibrāhīm ﷺ is found in the Qur’ān, it is not in the form of a narrative as, generally speaking, Qur’ān is not a narrative but rather is a bundle of scintillating points of light used to illustrate certain points which Allāh ﷺ chooses to make in order that people could, would and will, understand various well-known ‘folk; stories of their culture.

Even though we have some vestigial recollections of this living in the Judeo/Christian (or more accurately Greco/Roman) culture of America all of these stories of the prophets and various kindoms were as alive to the people who lived from the time of Mūsa ﷺ and ’Isa ﷺ (Jesus) up to late Ottoman times just as soap operas or TV dramas are “alive” to the people of today. These were stories told by of the descendants of the Jewish priestly caste of the Cohens or Kāhins in Arabic; the soothsayers of Arabia who spoke in rhymed *sāj*, a style of declamation used by story tellers who populated wine shops and, later, coffee shops and chai khanas and other such places found throughout the classical world, both East and West.

Since the general population were aware of these, often long complex genealogical narratives, when Allāh ﷺ revealed the Qur’ān it was not necessary to relate the entire narrative but rather to use stories extracted from those narratives to make or clarify certain points.

This has caused literal minded latter time uneducated western readers to complain that the Qur’ān is *just* “a hodge-podge of unrelated stories and out of synch chapters” that “follow the fables found in Talmud, which is where Mohamad (*sic*) got ideas for his religion.”

In any case there are those who know and those who don't know and that is just the way it is and we have to move on.

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدِرَ لِلإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِ فَوْلَىٰ لِلْقَاتِسَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي  
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

◦afaman sharaha-llāhu şadrahu l-il-◦islāmi  
fa huwa ´alā nūrin mir-rabbīhi  
fawaylun li-l-qāsiyati qulūbuhum min dhikri-llāhi  
◦ulāā ´ika fī dalālim-mubīn

Shall he then whose heart Allāh hath expanded for Islam,  
so that he followeth a light from his Lord  
be as he whose heart is hardened?

Then woe unto those whose hearts are hardened  
against remembrance of Allah — they are lost in a maze of error.

(Sūratu-z-Zumar 39:22)

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

hal yastaw-l-ladhīna ya°lamūn wa-l-ladhīna lā ya°alamūn  
are those who know and those who do not know –equal?

(Sūratu-z-Zumar 39:9)



Now with everybody in their place the next major question was the burning desire of °Ibrāhīm ﷺ for a son to succeed him for he was now in his nineties as was his wife and it did not seem that they would ever have a child as it appeared that Sarai was barren.

Now when they were in Ægypt Sarai has been given a handmaiden by the Pharaoh whose name was Hājar (Arabic: هاجر, Hājar/Hebrew: הָגָר) who served her mistress for some ten years. After they came out of Ægypt. Hājar was offered, by Sarai, to Abram to be as a second wife. because Sarai had been barren for so long and sought a way to fulfill the promise of El(llāh). (Genesis 16:3).

וְתָأָמֵר שֶׁרַי אֶל־אֲבָרְם הַנָּה־ נָא עַצְרָנִי יְהוָה מִלְּדָת בָּא־  
נָא אֶל־ שְׁפָחָתִי אָוְלִי אַבָּנָה מִמֶּנָּה וַיְשַׁמְּעַ אֲבָרְם לְקוֹל שֶׁרַי :

According to *Qisas al-Anbiya*, a collection of tales about the Prophets ﷺ, Hājar was the daughter of the King of Maghrib, and a descendant of the prophet Salih ﷺ. Her father was killed in battle by Pharaoh and she was captured and taken as slave. Later, because of her royal blood, she was made mistress of the female slaves and given access to all of Pharaoh's wealth.

### <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ

The name “Hājar” comes from *Ha ajruka* in Arabic which has the meaning “here is your recompense”.

Abram married Hājar and within a short time she became pregnant and when her time came she gave <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ the son he had for so many years waited — his name was <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā‘il ﷺ (Arabic: إِسْمَاعِيل Hebrew: בֶּן־עַזָּה) meaning “El(lلāh) has heard”.

According to Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه، Ismā‘il’s ﷺ birth to Hājar caused strife between her and Sarai. <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ at the command of El(lلāh) brought Hājar and their son to a land called Paran-aram or Farān in Arabic (in latter days this was understood to be the land surrounding Makkah). The objective of this journey was to ‘resettle’ rather than ‘expel’ Hājar. Ibrāhīm ﷺ left Hājar and Ismā‘il ﷺ and provided them with skin of water. Hājar, learning that Allāh عز وجلّ had ordered <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ to leave her in the desert of Paran, respected his decision. As Muslims we believe that Ibrāhīm ﷺ was ordered by Allāh عز وجلّ to leave Hājar in order to test his obedience and her loyalty.

Hājar soon ran out of water, and Ismā‘il ﷺ, an infant at that time, began to die. Hājar panicked and ran between two nearby hills, Safa and Marwah, repeatedly in search for water. After her seventh run, Ismā‘il ﷺ hit the ground with his heel and caused a miraculous well to spring from the earth. In other stories it is said that the Angel Jibrīl ﷺ scooped the well out of the ground. In any case this is the origin of Zamzam located a few metres from the Ka‘bah in Makkah.

The incident of her running between the Safa and Marwah hills is remembered by all Muslims when we perform our pilgrimage (Hajj) at Makkah. Part of the pilgrimage is to run seven times between the hills, in commemoration of Hājar’s courage and to symbolize the celebration of motherhood in <sup>ٰ</sup>Islām as well as the leadership of women. To complete the task Muslims also drink from the Well of Zamzam and take some of the water back home from pilgrimage in memory of Hājar.

As <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ took leave of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā‘il ﷺ and Hājar in the desert he made a very significant du‘ā<sup>ٰ</sup>.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْتَنِي وَرَبِّي أَنْ تُعَبِّدَ الْأَصْنَامَ

rabbi <sup>ٰ</sup>ijal hadba-l-balada āminan wa <sup>ٰ</sup>jānubāī  
wa baniyya an na<sup>ٰ</sup>buda al-asnām

My Lord! Make this land a place of safety  
and keep me and my progeny from worshipping idols.  
(Sūrah Ibrāhīm 14:35)

he continued:

بِرَبِّنَا الَّذِي أَسْكَنَتْ مِنْ ذُرْتَنِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرَ ذِي زَرْعٍ  
عِنْدَ بَيْنِكَ الْجَنَاحَ مِنْ رَبِّنَا الْيَقِيمُ الْأَصْلَاتُ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْنَدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهُويَ إِلَيْنَا  
وَأَرْزُقْهُمْ فِي الْأَنْتَارِ لِعَلَمَهُمْ بِشَكْرُونَ

rabbanā °innī °askantu min d̄hurriyyatī bi-wādīn għayri dhī zar°in  
°inda baytika-l-muħarrami rabbanā li-yuqīmū -s-ṣalāta  
fa-jā°al af°idatan mina-n-nāsi tahwī °ilayhim  
wa-r-zuqhum mina-th-thamarāti la°allahum yashkūrūn

Our Lord!

I have settled some of my offspring by Your Sacred House  
in an barren desert valley.

Our Lord! Let them establish ḥalāt!

Make the hearts of mankind incline towards them  
and provide them with fruits, so that hopefully they will be thankful.

(Sūrah Ibrāhīm 14:37)

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا يَخْفِي وَمَا يَنْعَلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ  
rabbanā °innaka ta°lamu mā nukhfī wa mā nu°linu wa ma yakhfā  
°ala-llāhi miñ shay°in fi-l-°ardi wa lā fī-s-samā°

Our Lord! You know what we keep hidden and what we divulge.  
Nothing is hidden from Allāh either on the earth or in heaven.

(Sūrah Ibrāhīm 14:38)

He departed after making some more du°ā° and thirteen years  
passed until Abram was 99 years old when El(lلāh) spoke to him  
again but in the Name of “El-Shaddai.” It means that El(lلāh) is all-  
sufficient and mighty – saying: (Genesis 17:1)

וְיַהְיָ אֶבְרָם בּוֹ – תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתִשְׁעַ שָׁנִים וַיַּרְא יְהוָה אֶל-  
אֶבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיוֹ אֱנִי – אֶל שְׁנֵי הַתְּהִלָּק לִפְנֵי וְהִיא תְּמִימִים:  
“I am El-Shaddai; walk before me and be blameless.””

He then told him that his name was to be changed to Abraham or  
◦Ibrāhīm ﷺ which means the father of a multitude. (Genesis 17:5)

וְלֹא – יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת- שְׁמֵךְ אֶבְרָם וְהִיא שְׁמֵן אֶבְרָהָם בַּי-  
אָב- הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּחִיכְךָ: and further told him

וְאַתָּנָה בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וְאַרְבָּה אָוֹתָךְ בָּמָאָד מָאָד:

“I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” (Genesis 17:2)

**וַיַּפְלֵل אֶבְרָם עַל־ פָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲתָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים לְאָמְרוֹ:**  
**אָנָּנוּ הַנֶּה בְּרִיתִי אֶתְּךָ וְהִיא תְּלֻכָּה לְאַב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם:**

At this “Abram fell facedown, as El(lāh) said to him “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the father of many nations.” (Genesis 17:3-4)

The Lord then expanded and defined the covenant, saying,

**וַיַּפְלֵל אֶבְרָם עַל־ פָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲתָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים לְאָמְרוֹ:**  
**אָנָּנוּ הַנֶּה בְּרִיתִי אֶתְּךָ וְהִיא תְּלֻכָּה לְאַב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם:**

“As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. (Genesis 17:9-11)

**וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־ אֶבְרָם וְאַתָּה אַתָּה – בְּרִיתִי תִּשְׁמַר אֶתְּךָ  
 מֹרְעָן אֶחָרֶיךָ לְדוֹתֶתֶם זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמַרְתָּ בֵּין נַפְשָׁךָ  
 וּבֵין זָרָעָךָ אֶחָרֶיךָ הַמּוֹלֵךְ בְּכֶם כָּל – זָכָר:**

The Lord also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.” (Genesis 17:15-16) (n.b.; the name Sarah means ‘Princess’)

**וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־ אֶבְרָם שְׂרֵךְ אֲשֶׁתֶּן לֹא – תִּקְרָא אַתָּה – שְׁמָה  
 שְׁרֵי כִּי שְׁرָה שְׁמָה: וּבְרָכְתִּי אַתָּה וְגַם נְתַתִּי מִמְּנָה لְךָ בָּן  
 וּבְרָכְתִּיךָ וְהִיא תְּהִיא לְגוּיִם מֶלֶךְ עַמִּים מִמְּנָה יְהִי:**

The Lord further told him, “Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. (إِسْحَاق ﷺ) and I will establish my covenant with him as well as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. (Genesis 17:19)

**וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶבְלָל שְׁרָה אֲשֶׁתֶּן יָלְדָתֶךָ לְךָ בָּן וּקְרָא אַתָּה –  
 שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק וְהַקְמָתִי אַתָּה –  
 בְּרִיתִי אֶתְּךָ לְבָרִית עֲזָלָם לִזְרָעָךָ אֶחָרֶיךָ:**



One note here is male circumcision is also among the rites of Islām and is part of the *fitrah* (فطرة), or the innate disposition and natural character and instinct of the human creation which Allāh ﷺ has gifted his servants with, and encouraged them to follow, so that they attain a high degree of respectability and dignity.”

Doing this is in accord with Allāh ﷺ ordering Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to follow the religion of 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ saying:

ثُمَّأَقْرَأْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّقِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ  
thumma 'awḥaynā 'ilayka 'āni 'ittabi' millata 'ibrāhīma ḥanīfan  
wamā kāna mina-l-mushrikīn

"Then We revealed to you: 'Follow the religion of 'Ibrāhīm,  
a man of pure natural belief. He was not one of the idolaters.'

(Sūratu-n-Nahl 16:123)



Now we have reached a mid-point or a place of relative equilibrium in recounting the life of the Prophet 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ.

I have attempted to explain, as it were both sides of the stories. but there is a little more to go with this mid-point before we go on to the finality, in this world at least, of the life of the Prophet 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ. Here I would like to touch briefly on what is called the *Philoxeny of 'Ibrāhīm* ﷺ

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

hal 'atāka ḥadīthu ḏayfi 'ibrāhīm-l-mukramīn

"Has the story of the honored guests of 'Ibrāhīm reached you?"  
(Sūratu-dh-Dhāriyāt 51:24)

'When they entered his house and said, 'Peace.' He answered, 'Peace, strangers!'. Then he went discreetly to his family and [they] brought forth a fat [roasted] calf and he set it before them and said, "Will you not eat?" And he became apprehensive of them for they did not eat of the meal. They said, 'Fear not,' and gave him good news of a wise young son. Then his wife [Sarah] came forward with a cry [of alarm] and slapped her face [in astonishment] saying, "An barren old woman like me?" They said, 'So says your Lord, indeed, He is the Wise, the Knowing.'" (Sūratu-dh-Dhāriyāt 51:25-30). In this way does Allāh ﷺ tell of his promise of the gift of 'Ishāq ﷺ to 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Sarah.

'Ibrāhīm ﷺ was known as the 'Father of guests' because he was so hospitable. And because of his great hospitality, Allāh ﷺ always sent him an angel to keep company with him, so that 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ would not have to sit and eat alone. It is said that the three angels who visited 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ are called 'honored' because 'Ibrāhīm ﷺ, the Intimate Friend (*al-khalīl*/الخَلِيل) of Allāh ﷺ, served them himself.

A year later when <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ reached the age of 100, (the above event happened when <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was 99) Sarah gave birth to her son <sup>10</sup>Ishāq ﷺ (meaning “he who laughs”) in the city of al-Khalil (Hebron). He was circumcised when he was eight days old in accord with the covenant mentioned earlier.

[By way of an historical note: Sarah died near al-Khalil, at the age of 127 and <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ too is buried there in the cave of Machpelah, which he bought for 400 shekels from a Hittite who took advantage of his grievous state and overcharged him. <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ had never owned a piece of land in his entire life until he bought that cave for, as a nomad, he never needed a *place* in which to live, but according to one scholar “the dead require a permanent resting place.”]

Afterwards <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ took a new wife, Keturah, who gave him six more children, some with Arabic names and others with Hebrew names. He also found a wife – Rebecca from Nahor near Haran in northern Mesopotamia – for <sup>10</sup>Ishāq ﷺ. <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ himself died at the age of 175. The two brothers, who were also Prophets, Ismā‘il ﷺ and <sup>10</sup>Ishāq ﷺ, reunited to bury him in Machpelah next to Sarah. Later, <sup>10</sup>Ishāq ﷺ and his wife Rebekah, and their son, the Prophet Yaqūb ﷺ and his wife Leah were buried there too. Ismā‘il ﷺ is buried in Makkah next to the Ka‘bah with his mother Hājar ﷺ.

But to continue with the story. When the angels ﷺ left <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Sarah two of the angels went on to visit <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm’s ﷺ cousin Lüt ﷺ and the story that follows is used to demonstrate the disapproval of rape and homosexuality in the Judeo/<sup>11</sup>Islāmic context.

Lüt ﷺ as you will remember when he parted from <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ went into Moab in what is now southern Jordan to the land in which Sodom and Gomorrah were the chief cities to preach to the people on monotheism and to stop them from their lustful and violent acts.

According to both the Qur’ān and the Tanakh (גֶּנְדָּע), the messages of Lüt ﷺ were ignored by the inhabitants and Sodom and Gomorrah who were subsequently destroyed. They cannot be exactly located, but it may be supposed that they were somewhere in the plain east of the Dead Sea. The story of their destruction is told in the 19th chapter of Genesis and in Sūrah Hud 11:77-83 in the Qur’ān.

Two angels in the form of handsome young men came to Lüt ﷺ in the evening and became his guests by night. The inhabitants of Sodom in their lust for unnatural sex imagined there was something going on and invaded the house of Lüt ﷺ but were repulsed. The angels warned Lüt ﷺ to escape with his family.

“Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” (Gen. 19:24–26). Note that the people of Lūt ﷺ are people to whom he is sent on a mission. He was not of them, as was Shu<sup>c</sup>ayb ﷺ. But he looked upon the people there as brothers, as a Prophet ﷺ always does.

Here, in translation, is how Allāh ﷺ describes what happened.

“77. And when Our messengers [the two Angels] came to Lūt, he was anxious for them, feeling powerless to protect them, and said, ‘This is a truly terrible day!’ 78. His people came rushing towards him; they used to commit foul deeds. He said, ‘Oh my people, here are my daughters. Guard your selves against evil for the sake of Allāh and do not disgrace me with my guests. Is there not a single rightly guided man among you?’ 79. They said, ‘You know very well that we have no use for your daughters. You know very well what we want.’ 80. He said, ‘If only I had the strength to stop you or could find some strong support to rely upon!’ 81. They [the Angelic messengers] said, ‘Oh Lūt, we are the messengers of your Lord. They [your enemies] will never reach you. Leave now with your household in the dead of night, and let none among you look back. Only your wife will suffer the fate that will befall the others. Their appointed time is the morning and is the morning not near?’ 82. And so when Our Order came to pass, We overthrew their town and turned it upside down and rained down stones of burning clay on it – layer upon layer, 83. earmarked by your Lord. [And these punishments] are not far from the evildoers.”

We should remark that when the Angels ﷺ visited <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ as his guests and gave him glad tidings of a wise son they also told him that they had been sent by Allāh ﷺ to the “guilty people” of Lūt ﷺ to destroy them with “a shower of stones of clay” and deliver Lūt ﷺ and those who believed in him, except his wife, saying “she is of those who look back and lag behind.” Allāh ﷺ paints the wife of Lūt ﷺ as an “example for the unbelievers” as she was married to a righteous man but cheated him by not believing in his message and thus, along with them, suffered her terrible fate.

The people of the Overturned Cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, the twin cities which Lūt ﷺ was sent to with the message of Allāh ﷺ, transgressed consciously against the limits set by Allāh ﷺ.

Their avarice led to inhospitality and robbery, which in turn led to the humiliation of strangers by mistreatment and rape. But above all was their immoral act of homosexuality which was symptomatic of their attitudes, and when Lūt ﷺ urging them to abandon their transgressions which were against the limits (*hudūd*) set by Allāh ﷺ, they ridiculed him and threatened him with violence.

When the two Angels ﷺ in the disguise of handsome young boys came to Lūt ﷺ, he became distressed, knowing the character of the people, and feeling himself powerless to protect the visitors against the unbridled desires of the residents of the city. He said, “This is a terrible day.” When the people – overjoyed at the news of some new young boys in the village – came to snatch them away from Lūt ﷺ, he tried to convince them to refrain from practising their lusts on the visitors, and offered, in their stead, his own daughters in marriage in return for the free release of the angels. But they were unrelenting, replying. “Well you know we have no need of your daughters: indeed you know exactly who and what we want!” Allāh ﷺ says “they moved blindly in the frenzy of approaching death”.

Lūt ﷺ was powerless to protect the boys, who revealed to him that they were indeed Angels ﷺ sent by Allāh ﷺ to punish the people for their transgressions. They advised Lūt ﷺ to leave the place during the night and never look back, informing him that his wife would be left behind on account of her own sinful nature and that they “were about to bring down upon the folk of this township a fury from the sky because they are evil-doers.” Keeping his faith in Allāh ﷺ, Lūt ﷺ, left his home and the cities during the night with his family and others who believed in him, and only his wife stayed behind. When morning came, Allāh ﷺ turned the cities upside down, and rained stones down on them. We know from archeological investigations that the area is vulnerable to earthquakes.

Geological and archaeological evidence suggest that a huge earthquake took place about four and a half thousand years ago – the time of the destruction described in both Tanakh and Qur’ān.

Flammable methane pockets lie under the Dead Sea shores; the earthquake would have ignited them, the ground would have turned to quicksand, and a massive landslide would have swept the cities into the water coupled with a volcanic eruption which transformed the sand into fiery stones hard as baked clay which put a final end to the lives and misdeeds of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.



“flee to the mountains or you will be swept away...”

(Genesis 19:17)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה בְּהִזְכִּיאָם אֶתְּנָא חֲזִיקָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּלֹט עַל־נֶפֶשׁ אֵל  
תִּבְּרִיט אַחֲרֵיךְ וְאַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־  
הַכֹּבֶר קָרְבָּה הַמְּלֹט פֹו־תִּסְפֵּה:



According to the Bible Lot (לוֹט) and his two of his daughters escaped to Zoar, located in the higher elevation above the plain (today known as the Jordan Valley). They found refuge in a cave. The husbands of all Lot's other daughters (the number of Lot's sons-in-law is not given) had refused to leave, therefore they and his other daughters by his wife Ado (turned to salt) perished in Sodom. Genesis 19:31-38 records these two virgin daughters who escaped with Lot were concerned about his no longer having children. In fact in reading Genesis 19:31, it almost looks as though they presumed that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a worldwide destruction and that there were no more men on the earth.

The two remaining daughters were not married as they were virgins too young for marriage and under the spiritual protection of Lot, and therefore saved from destruction. They were in the house with their mother Ado when the time came to flee. They did – she didn't. According to Genesis 19:31-38 after the destruction these two daughters thought no man was left in Lot's lineage. This is because their brothers all died in Sodom. They engaged in incest with their father and had his offspring in order to preserve his seed.

Again, according to Biblical sources, the firstborn daughter bore a son and named him Moab, who became the father of that nation. The second daughter bore a son and named him Ben-Ammi, who became the father of the Ammonites (mostly the nation of Jordan) who were treated as family upon the entry of the Children of Israel into the promised land due to the relation between Abraham and Lot, although later they considered each other enemies and frequently engaged in war with one another.

ותאמר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה אֲבִינוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בָּאָרֶץ  
לֹבֶן עַלְמָנוּ כִּדְרָר כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לְכָה נְשָׁקָה אַת־אֲבִינוּ יְיֻן  
וְנְשָׁכְבָה עָמֹנוּ וְנְחִיה מֵאֲבִינוּ זָנוּן וְתַשְׁקִין אַת־אֲבִינוּ יְיֻן  
בְּלִילָה הַוָּא וְתַבָּא הַבְּכִירָה וְתַשְׁכַּב אַת־אֲבִיה וְלֹא־יָדַע  
בְּשַׁכְבָה וּבְקָוָמָה וְיָהִי מִמְּחֻרָת וְתַאמְרָה הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְעִירָה  
הַוָּא שְׁכַבְתִּי אִמְשָׁ אַת־אֲבִי נְשָׁקָנוּ יְיֻן גַּם־הַלִּילָה וּבְאֵי שְׁכַבְתִּי  
עָמֹנוּ וְנְחִיה מֵאֲבִינוּ זָר וְתַשְׁקִין גַּם בְּלִילָה הַוָּא אַת־אֲבִינוּ  
יְיֻן וְתַקְמֵם הַצְעִירָה וְתַשְׁכַּב עָמֹנוּ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשַׁכְבָה וּבְקָמָה  
וְתַהְרַגֵּן שְׂתֵּי בָנֹות—לוֹט מֵאֲבִיה וְתַלְדֵה הַבְּכִירָה בָּנו וְתַקְנָא שָׁמוֹ  
מוֹאָב הַוָּא אֲבִי־מוֹאָב עַד־הַיּוֹם: וְהַצְעִירָה גַּם־הַוָּא יָלְדָה בָּנו  
וְתַקְרָא שָׁמְנוּ בָּנו—עַמִּי הַוָּא אֲבִי בָנָי—עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם: ס

Allāh ﷺ makes clear in Qur'ān that Lot or Lūt (لوط) is a prophet, and since all prophets are known to be examples of moral and spiritual rectitude these stories of incest are known to be false

After the death of Lūt ﷺ (when Ḥishāq ﷺ was 39) he was buried near to Banī Na‘īm (بني نعيم) which is a Palestinian town in the southern West Bank located five miles east of al-Khalil (Hebron) which is the final resting place of Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Ḥishāq ﷺ and Yaqūb ﷺ and their various wives. The tomb of Lūt ﷺ was converted into a masjid when Islāmic rule began and remained so under Crusader rule. This tomb is known as Maqam an-Nabi Yatīn ("Shrine of the Truthful Prophet"). Local legend claims Lūt ﷺ prayed at the site and imprints of his feet in a rock there are visible. The tombs of the daughters of Lūt ﷺ are on an opposite hill nearby. According to both Muslim and Christian tradition, Banī Na‘īm is the place where Abraham, after the departure of the angels, saw the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah "rising as the smoke of a furnace".

Kufic inscriptions on the front entrance to the masjid state that the scholar ‘Abdullāh bin Muḥammad declared "the hills, the plains, the buildings, the paths, the gardens, the trees and the passage that transverses it" are an endowment "for the prophet Lūt ﷺ, son of Haran, brother of Ibrāhīm ﷺ the friend (al-Khalil) of Allah the Compassionate may the blessings of Allāh be upon them ..."

As we mentioned earlier the destruction of the Cities of the Plain – or the the *Cities Overturned* (سَافَلَهَا) as Allāh ﷺ calls them took place the day after the *Philoxeny of Ibrāhīm* ﷺ when he was 99 years old and the birth of his *second* son came a year later when he had reached the age of 100 and Sarah was 90 when she gave birth to her son <sup>۳</sup>Ishāq ﷺ.

Immediately after Sarah gave birth to her son <sup>۳</sup>Ishāq ﷺ conflict arose, as Sarah wanted no part of any other son who might claim the inheritance of his father. According to Biblical tradition she ordered her husband, <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, to “Get rid of that brown skinned slave woman and her son, for I do not want that *slave woman’s* son will to ever share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

(What one can see here is, perhaps, one of the earliest manifestation of Jewish exceptionalism which holds that Judaism is “exceptional” (unusual or extraordinary) in some unique magical way and so does not need to conform to normal rules or general principles – this idea continues in the form of Zionism in the present day.)

In any case this story differs from Qur’ānic and <sup>۲</sup>Islāmic accounts in which one day <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ woke up, and in response to a veridical dream, asked his wife Hājar to get her son and prepare for a long journey even though the child was still nursing and not yet weaned.

I related this earlier but, briefly, <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ travelled south with his wife and child through cultivated land, desert, and mountains until he reached the desert of Paran in the Arabian Peninsula and came to an uncultivated valley having no fruit, no trees, no food, no water or any other sign of life. After <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ had settled his wife and child he left them with a small amount of food and water which was hardly enough for two days. He then turned around and walked away. His wife hurried after him asking: “Where are you going <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, leaving us in this barren valley?”

<sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ did not answer her, but continued walking. She repeated what she had said, but he remained silent. Finally she understood that he was not acting on his own initiative. She realized that Allāh ﷺ had commanded him to do this. She asked him directly: “Did Allāh ﷺ command you to do so?” He replied: “Yes.” Then his believing and great wife said: “We are not going to be lost, since Allāh ﷺ Who has commanded you to do this is with us.”

It was then that <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ made his well known supplication that Allāh ﷺ “would fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.”

And concluded his supplication by saying, “Oh our Lord! Certainly, You know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing on the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah.” (14:37-38)



With the birth of his second born son, <sup>◦</sup>Ishāq ﷺ, and all that has come after it we come to the major dividing point in the history of Semitic monotheism which hinges on who exactly <sup>◦</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ attempted to sacrifice and, when we look deeply into the story, why?

<sup>וַיֹּהֵי</sup> אַחֲרֵי הַזָּבְדָּנִים הָאֱלֹהִים נִסְחָה אַתָּה – אֶבְרָהָם <sup>וַיֹּאמֶר</sup> אֶלְיוֹן אֶבְרָהָם <sup>וַיֹּאמֶר</sup> הַנְّגִינִי: 2 <sup>וַיֹּאמֶר</sup> קְחָ – נָא אַתָּה – בָּנְךָ אַתָּה יְחִידָן אָשָׁר – אֲהַבְתָּ אַתָּה – יִצְחָק וְלֹךְ – לֹךְ אַל – אָרֶץ הַמִּרְיָה וְהַעֲלָהוּ שֵׁם לְעַלְלָה עַל אָחָד הַהְרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִיךְ:

Some time later G-d tested Abraham saying “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then G-d said, “Take your son, **your only son**, (emphasis added) Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” This according to Genesis 22:1-2

Whereas in Qur<sup>◦</sup>ān we find a very different story!

مَلَّ بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بْنَنِي إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أُدْبِحُكَ  
 فَأَنْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى ؟ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمِرْ  
 سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

fa-lamma balagha ma<sup>◦</sup>ahu-s-sa<sup>◦</sup>ya  
 qāla yā bunayya <sup>◦</sup>innī <sup>◦</sup>arya fi-l-manāmi <sup>◦</sup>annī <sup>◦</sup>adubāhuka  
 fā<sup>◦</sup>n-ḍhūr mādhā taray?  
 qāla yā <sup>◦</sup>abati-af<sup>◦</sup>al mā tu<sup>◦</sup>maru satajidunī <sup>◦</sup>in shā<sup>◦</sup>a-llāhu mina-ṣ-ṣabirīn  
 Then when he (his son) reached the age of working with him, he said,  
 “Oh my son, surely I see in a dream  
 (Literally: in the time of sleeping)  
 that I should sacrifice you ; so, look, what do you see?”  
 He said, “Oh my father, do whatever you are commanded;  
 you will find me, Allāh willing, among the patient.”  
 (Sūrah Sāāffat 37:105)

To this writer, the crucial phrase in Genesis is “*your only son*” which can also be translated as your “first born son” which clearly points to Ismā<sup>◦</sup>il ﷺ rather than <sup>◦</sup>Ishāq ﷺ as the intended sacrifice.

### <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ

This could also be translated as “[One day,] when the child had become old enough to share in his [father’s] work, [Literally had “attained to [the age of] walking [or striving] with him” which is a metonym for the child’s attaining to an age when he could understand, and share in, his father’s faith and aims] his father said: “Oh my son! I have seen in a dream or sleep that I should sacrifice you: consider, then, what would be your view!” [His son] answered: “O my father! Do what you have been told to do: you will find me, Allāh willing, among those who are patient!”

The story, a story of sacrifice, as most Muslims know, goes like this. One of the main trials in the life of <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was to face the implications of a dream he had in which he “saw” he was to sacrifice his first born son Ismā’īl ﷺ about the time Ismā’īl ﷺ was 13 (<sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ at that time was 112), Allāh ﷺ decided to test their faith in and submission to Allāh ﷺ in public.

This was an almost unimaginable act – sacrificing his first born son, who Allāh ﷺ had granted to him after many years of deep prayer. <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ knew that the dreams of the prophets were one of the ways Allāh ﷺ communicated with his Prophets ﷺ. He was also not totally sure that this was the command of Allāh ﷺ Who he knew to be most Merciful and compassionate or just a dream that had arisen due to the difficulties he faced having two sons by two very different mothers.

<sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ struggled with this until he was convinced and was ready to sacrifice Ismā’īl ﷺ for the sake of Allāh ﷺ, but he could not sacrifice Ismā’īl ﷺ without getting his consent. Ismā’īl ﷺ had to be consulted as to whether he was willing to give up his life as fulfillment of what was afterall only a dream. This consultation, in turn, was a major test of the maturity of Ismā’īl ﷺ in faith, love and commitment to Allāh ﷺ, and his willingness to obey his father and sacrifice his own life for the sake of the order of Allāh ﷺ.

<sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ presented the matter to Ismā’īl ﷺ and asked for his opinion about the dream. The reaction of Ismā’īl ﷺ was absolutely astounding. He did not show any hesitation or reservation even for a moment and simply said, “Father, do what you have been commanded. You will find me, <sup>9</sup>in shāā’allāh, to be patient.” His mature response, his deep insight into the nature of his father’s dream, his own deep commitment to Allāh ﷺ, and ultimately his willingness to sacrifice his own life for the sake of Allāh ﷺ were unmatched save perhaps for the self sacrifice of al-Husayn ﷺ centuries later who showed his own deep commitment to Allāh ﷺ.

When both father and son had shown their perfect obedience to Allāh ﷺ and they had practically demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice their most precious possessions for His sake—<sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ by laying down his son for sacrifice and Ismā'īl ﷺ by lying patiently under the knife – Allāh ﷺ called out to them stating that their sincere intentions had been accepted and that <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ need not carry out the sacrifice of Ismā'īl ﷺ. Instead, at the last moment <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was shown a ram to sacrifice.

Allāh ﷺ told them that they had passed the test imposed upon them, by the obedience of <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, to fulfill the vision which he attributed to Allāh ﷺ and by the sincerity of Ismā'īl ﷺ to his father.

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا أَبِرَاهِيمَ  
قُدْ صَدَّقَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَّلِكَ بَخْرِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ  
wa nādaynāhu <sup>٣</sup>an yāā <sup>٣</sup>ibārahīmu  
qadā saddaqta-r-ru<sup>٣</sup>ya inna kadhalika najzī-l-muhsinīn

“And We called out to him:

‘Oh <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm

you have fulfilled the dream.’

This is how We reward those who do good.”

(Sūrah Sāāffat 37:105)

You may well ask yourself why I have said concerning <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, “his vision which he attributed to Allāh ﷺ”.

If you look at the <sup>٣</sup>āyat carefully you see that what is said is “*qāla yā bunayya <sup>٣</sup>innī <sup>٣</sup>arya fi-l-manāmi*” which translates as, “Oh my son, surely I saw when I slept”. *Manāmi* means “the time of sleep.”

Nowhere does it say in the <sup>٣</sup>āyat that this is what Allāh ﷺ either said or ordered. <sup>٣</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ is certainly within the bounds of prophetic understanding or action to “think” that this dream was from Allāh ﷺ but then again what if it was not from Allāh ﷺ but from his own understanding or mis-understanding?

For if you really think about it, consider what Allāh ﷺ has said concerning His Own Self:

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

katāba rabakum <sup>٣</sup>ala nafsihi-r-rahmah

your Lord has written Mercy (*rahmah*) on His Self.

(Sūratu-l-An<sup>c</sup>am 6:54)

Why, given that the Innate Nature of Allāh ﷺ is *Rahmah* (Mercy) would He order <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ to sacrifice his son? Surely such sacrifice, long practiced by the people of the East (and elsewhere), was an anachronism and certainly not befitting One who was Mercy Itself. Perhaps you may think that I am being impious or even blasphemous in thinking that <sup>۱</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ may have been deluded, as he was surely a blessed prophet, but in this case I ask you to consider the story of Mūsa ﷺ and al-Khidr ﷺ in Sūrah al-Kaf when Mūsā ﷺ, undoubtedly a prophet, was unable to understand the teaching and the actions of al-Khidr ﷺ and his orders. In <sup>۲</sup>āyat 65 through 82 the story is told of how Mūsa ﷺ meets al-Khidr ﷺ at the junction of the two seas and asks for permission to accompany him so Mūsā ﷺ can learn “right knowledge of what [he has] been taught”.

Allāh ﷺ says of al-Khidr ﷺ (not named as such but rather) that he is “one from among Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves,”

وَعَلِمَنَا مِنْ لَدُنَا عِلْمًا

wa <sup>۱</sup>alamnāhu min ladunā <sup>۲</sup>ilmā

and We taught him knowledge (<sup>۲</sup>ilm) from Our Self.

(Sūrah Kāf 18:65)



Concerning the sacrifice, there remains one crucial point left to try to clarify which is the question of which son he intended to sacrifice.

Remember in Genesis we read:

“Then God said, “Take your son, **your only son**, (emphasis added) Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” According to Genesis 22:1-2

Again I find this reading another case of Jewish exceptionalism, for Genesis says, “Your only son Issac” which seems to be a clear case of religious amnesia or refusal to admit the reality that he had two sons as was already made clear earlier in Genesis.

Moreover since “your only son.” can also be translated as “your first born son” it is in accord with the understanding of primogeniture practiced by Bani Israel both then and now, though this was changed for Muslims with the advent of Muḥammad ﷺ.

We know from contemporary scholastics and biblical scholars that the Torah was heavily re-written during the the Babylonian captivity under the aegis of Ezra the Scribe (עֶזְרָא הַסּוֹפֵר) (<sup>۱</sup>Uzayr/عزير).

It was Ezra who during during the Babylonian captivity, led the people to locate the only surviving copy of Torah as the remaining had all been burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rotting and crumpled, so Ezra made a new copy of the Torah. He thus restored the Torah for Bani Israel. After this miracle, the Muslim scholar Ibn Kathir writes that Jews began to claim that Ezra was a ‘son of G-d’.

Another commentary states that: “Uzair (Ezra) lived during the period around 450 B.C. The Jews regarded him with great reverence as the revivalist of their Scriptures which had been lost during their captivity in Babylon after the death of Prophet Sulayman ﷺ. So much so that they had lost all the knowledge of their Law, their traditions and of Hebrew, their national language. It was at this critical junction that Ezra re-wrote the Old Testament and revived the Law. That is why Bani Israel used very exaggerated language in his reverence which misled some of the Jewish sects to make him ‘the son of G-d’. The Qur’ānic text, however, does not assert that all the Jews were unanimous in declaring Ezra as ‘the son of G-d’. What it implies is that the perversion in the articles of faith of the Bani Israel concerning Allāh ﷺ had degenerated to such an extent that there were some among them who considered Ezra as a son of G-d.

What I am trying to make clear here is that due to such events as the Babylonian captivity as well as the years of Exile, the Torah went through many re-writes to the point that modern computer and algorithmic research show that the Torah was written by many hands. whereas for millions of Jews and Christians, it's a tenet of their faith that G-d is the author of the core text of the Hebrew Bible – the Torah, also known as the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses. But since the advent of modern biblical scholarship, academic researchers now believe the text was written by a number of different authors whose work could be identified by seemingly different ideological agendas and linguistic styles and the different names they used for G-d such as as Yahweh, Yahweh-raah, Yahweh-tsidkenu, YHVH, Adonai, EL and Elohim, El Elyon, El Roi, El Shaddai,

All that, in any case is another story, and the only reason I have brought it up is to show (if you will read the passages from Sūrah Kaf) how even a prophet can be mistaken and lack understanding of what Allāh ﷺ actually is transmitting — and that it could have been that <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ misread his “dream” for the order of Allāh ﷺ for to this poor person it seems beneath the Mercy of Allāh ﷺ to ask a man to slaughter his son – morevoer a son that he had prayed for for years and had suffered for so much in his two marriages.

<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ

But to continue with the story of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ – if you go back to the earlier mentioned <sup>ٰ</sup>ayāt you will read:

مَلَّا بَلَغَ مَعْدَةَ السَّعْيِ

fa-lamma balagha ma<sup>c</sup>ahu-s-sa<sup>c</sup>ya

Then when he (his son) reached the age of working with him...  
(Sūrah Sāāffāt 37:105)

Here what is important is what Allāh ﷺ *actually* ordered <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ to do was to go back into the deserts of Paran and raise up the foundations of the “Ancient House” (بيت العتيق) or the Bayt al-<sup>c</sup>Atīq, originally the dwelling place of Adam and Hawāā<sup>ٰ</sup> ﷺ, which had been swept away down to its foundation stones in the flood of Nūh ﷺ, so that once again there would be a “House” for Allāh ﷺ rather a temple with all that is implied in the concept and actuality of what a temple is as opposed to what a “House” is.

وَادْبُرْ أَنَّا إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَن لَا تُشْرِكَ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهَرْ نَبِيًّي  
لِلظَّاهِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالْكَعْسُوجُورِ

wa-<sup>ٰ</sup>idh bawwa<sup>ٰ</sup>nā li-ibrāhīma makāna-l-bayti  
    <sup>ٰ</sup>an lā tushrik bī shay<sup>ٰ</sup>an wa tāhir baytiya  
li-<sup>ٰ</sup>it̄ā<sup>ٰ</sup> ifīna wa-l-qā<sup>ٰ</sup>imīna wa-r-rukka<sup>c</sup>i-s-sujūd

And We located the position of the House for Ibrahim:

‘Do not associate anything with Me  
and purify My House for those who circle it,  
and those who stand and bow and prostrate.

(Sūratu-l-Hajj 22:26)

“Oh <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il! Allah ﷺ has given me an order.” <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ said: “Do what your Lord has ordered you to do.” <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ asked: “Will you help me?” <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ affirmed his willingness to help and <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ said: “Allāh has ordered me to build a house here”; pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it.”

The Prophet ﷺ added: “Then they raised the foundations of the House (al-Ka<sup>c</sup>bah/الكعبة). <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ brought the stones and <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ built the walls and when the walls became high, <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ rolled a large stone for his father to stand on so his father ﷺ could carry on building, while <sup>ٰ</sup>Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ was handing him the stones, and, as they built, both of them were saying, “Accept this from us.” The Prophet ﷺ added, “Both of them went on building and going round the Ka<sup>c</sup>bah saying: (al-Bukhari 4:583)

<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ

رَبَّنَا تَقْبِلُ مِنَّا إِذَا كَأْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَالِيمُ

rabbana taqabbal minna <sup>ٰ</sup>innaka <sup>ٰ</sup>anta-s-samee<sup>c</sup>u-l-<sup>c</sup>alīm

“Oh our Lord! Accept (this service) from us,  
Truly, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”  
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:127)

<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ completed the building of al-Ka<sup>c</sup>bah on the Command of Allāh ﷺ. In his time, the Ka<sup>c</sup>bah was rectangular in shape and reached the height of four and a half meters. It contained two doors at the ground level but had no roof. <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ placed the Black Stone (Hijar al-<sup>ٰ</sup>Aswad/الحجر الأسود) at one of the corners of the Ka<sup>c</sup>bah to mark the starting point of Tawaf or circumambulation.

The Ka<sup>c</sup>bah remained the same up till when the Quraysh rebuilt the Ka<sup>c</sup>bah. According to <sup>ٰ</sup>Ā<sup>c</sup>isha ﷺ, “The Prophet ﷺ said:

‘Don’t you see that when your folk built the Ka<sup>c</sup>bah, they did not build it on all the foundations built by <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ?’ I said, “Oh Messenger of Allāh! Why don’t we rebuild it on the foundations of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ ?’ He said. ‘But for the fact that your folk have recently given up infidelity (I would have done so).’” Narrated Ibn Umar: “<sup>ٰ</sup>Ā<sup>c</sup>isha ﷺ must have heard this from the Prophet ﷺ for I saw that the Prophet ﷺ used not to touch the two corners facing al-Hijr only because the House had not been built on the foundations of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ .” (Bukhārī 55: 587]

After <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Ismā<sup>ٰ</sup>il ﷺ finished raising up the ancient House, Allāh ﷺ ordered him to:

وَادْعُ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجَّ يَأْتُوكَ رَجَالًا

wa <sup>ٰ</sup>adh-dhīn fi-n-nāsi bi-l-hajji ya<sup>ٰ</sup>tūka rijalan

And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men:  
(Sūratu-l-Hajj 22:27)

It is reported from Ibn Abbas ﷺ and others that <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ said: “Oh Lord, how can I convey this to people when my voice will not reach them?” He was told, “Call them and We will convey it.” (at-Tabarī (18: 605,607)

So <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ stood up and said: “Oh Mankind! Your Lord has established a House so come on pilgrimage to it.” The mountains lowered themselves so that his voice would reach all regions of the earth, and those who were still in their mother's wombs and their father's loins would hear the call. The response came from everyone

in the cities, deserts and countryside, and those whom Allah decreed will make the pilgrimage until the Day of Judgment, as Allah said:

وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَاتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجَعَ عَمِيقٍ

wa<sup>o</sup>ala kūlli ḥamirin ya<sup>o</sup>tīna min kūlli fajjin <sup>o</sup>amīqā  
they will come on foot and on every kind of lean camel,  
on account of [their] journeys  
through deep and distant mountain passes.  
(Sūratu-l-Hajj 22:27)

After the construction of the Ka<sup>o</sup>bah, <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ invoked Allāh ﷺ to bless the city of Makkah and those who live therein and provide them with provisions:

وَادْقَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبِّيْتَ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلْدَةَ آمِنًا وَأَنْزَقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الشَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَّ  
مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

wa-idh qāla <sup>o</sup>ibrāhīmu rabbi <sup>o</sup>ij<sup>o</sup> al hadhā baladan āminan  
wa-r-zuq ahlahu mina-th-thamarāti  
man āmana minhum bi-llāhi wa-l-yawmi-l-<sup>o</sup>ākhir  
“And Ibrahim said: ‘My Lord, make this a City of Peace,  
and feed its people with fruits,-  
such of them as believe in Allāh and the Last Day’ ...”  
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:126)

And Allāh ﷺ responded to the call of <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَتَابِلَ لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمَنَّا

wa-idh ja<sup>o</sup> alnā-l-bayta mathābatan li-n-nāsi wa <sup>o</sup>amnān  
“Remember We made the House (the Kaaba)  
a place of assembly for men and a place of safety...”  
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:125)

and:

أَوْلَئِكَنْ هُنْ حِرَمٌ أَمَنَّا بِهِ جَنِيْحٌ إِنَّهُمْ رَاتُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
رِزْقًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

<sup>ٰ</sup>awa lam numakkin lahum haraman <sup>o</sup>amnan  
yujbā ilayhi thamarātu kūlli shay<sup>o</sup>in rizqan min ladunnā  
wa lākinna <sup>o</sup>aktharahum lā ya<sup>o</sup>lamūn

“...Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary,  
to which are brought as tribute fruits of all kinds,  
a provision from Ourselves? but most of them understand not.”  
(Sūratu-l- Qasas 28:57)

Ibn Abbas ﷺ said: “On the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Allāh ﷺ has made this town a sanctuary. Its thorny bushes should not be cut, its game should not be chased, and its fallen things should not be picked up except by one who would announce it publicly.’” (Bukhārī, V.26:657)

<sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ also invoked Allāh ﷺ:

رَبَّنَا وَأَبْعَثْتَ فِيهِ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ إِلَيْنَا أَنْتَ وَيَعْلَمُهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ  
وَإِذْ كَيْهُمْ أَنْكَدْتَ الْعَزِيزَ الْحَكِيمَ

rabbana wa <sup>ٰ</sup>b<sup>c</sup>ath fihim rasūlan miñhum yatlū <sup>ٰ</sup>alayhim ayātika  
wa yu<sup>c</sup>allimuhumu-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata wa yuzakkīhim  
<sup>ٰ</sup>innaka <sup>ٰ</sup>añta-l-<sup>c</sup>azīzu-l-hakīm

“Our Lord! Send them an Apostle of their own,

who shall rehearse Your Signs to them

and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them:

For You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:129)

and indeed Allāh ﷺ answered his supplication and prayer and sent Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, who was born in Makkah, from where Islam and the message of the One G-d spread throughout the world. at the same time <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ was tried by Allāh ﷺ.

وَإِذْ أَبْلَغَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبِّهِ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَعْمَلَ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا فَقَالَ وَمَنْ  
ذَرْتَ قَالَ لَا يَنْهَا عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ

wa <sup>ٰ</sup>idhi <sup>c</sup>bā-talā <sup>ٰ</sup>ibrāhīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin  
fa <sup>ٰ</sup>atammahunna qala <sup>ٰ</sup>innī jā<sup>c</sup>iluka li-n-nasi <sup>ٰ</sup>imāman  
qāla wa min d̄burriyyatī  
qāla lā yanālu <sup>ٰ</sup>ahdi-d̄h-d̄hālimīn

“And remember that <sup>ٰ</sup>Ibrāhīm was tried by his Lord with certain Commands, which he carried out completely:

He said: ‘I will make you an <sup>ٰ</sup>Imām to the Nations.’

He asked:

‘And also from my offspring!’

He answered:

‘My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.’”

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:124)

وَاتَّبَعَاهُ أَجْرٌ كَفِيلٌ لِلْدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّمَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

wa <sup>وَ</sup>āātaynahu <sup>وَ</sup>ajrahu fi-d-dunya  
wa <sup>وَ</sup>innahu fi-l-ākhirati lamina-ṣ-ṣalihīn

“...and We granted him his reward in this life;  
and in the Hereafter he was in (the company) of the Righteous.”  
(Sūratu-l-<sup>وَ</sup>Ankabūt 29:27)

وَوَهَبْنَا لِإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلَّا هَدَنَا وَنُوْحَاهَدَنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ  
وَمِنْ ذِرَّتِنَا دُرْدُورَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَبْرَوْبَ وَيُوسُفَ  
وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ بَخْرِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ •  
وَزَكَرْيَا وَعِصَمِي وَعِيسَى وَالْيَاسُ كُلُّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ  
وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ وَالْيَسْعَى وَيُونُسُ وَلَوْطًا وَكُلُّا فَضَلَّنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ •  
وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذِرَّاتِهِمْ وَأَخْوَانَهُمْ وَاجْبَيْنَا هُمْ وَهَدَنَا هُنَّ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ •  
ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ

wa wahabnā lahu <sup>وَ</sup>ishhāqa wa ya<sup>وَ</sup>qūba kulla hadaynā  
wa nūḥan hadayna min qablu

wa min d̄hurriyyatihī dāwūdā wa sulaymānā wa <sup>وَ</sup>ayyūbā wa yūsufā  
wa mūsā wa hārūnā wa kadhalikā najazī-l-muhsinīn •

wa zakariyyā wa yahyā wa <sup>وَ</sup>isā wa <sup>وَ</sup>ilyāsa kulla mina-ṣ-ṣalihīn •  
wa <sup>وَ</sup>ismā<sup>وَ</sup>ila wa <sup>وَ</sup>ilyasa<sup>وَ</sup>a wa yūnusa wa lūṭān

wa kulla fadḍalnā <sup>وَ</sup>ala-l-<sup>وَ</sup>ālamīn •

wa min <sup>وَ</sup>āaba<sup>وَ</sup>ihim wa d̄hurriyyatihim wa <sup>وَ</sup>ikhwanihim wa  
<sup>وَ</sup>ijātabaynahum wa hadaynāhum ila siraṭin mustaqīm •  
dhālikā huda-llāhi yahdī bihi mañy-yashhā<sup>وَ</sup>ū min <sup>وَ</sup>ibādihi  
wa law <sup>وَ</sup>as̄hrakū lahabīṭa <sup>وَ</sup>añhum mā kānū ya<sup>وَ</sup>malūn •

"We gave him <sup>وَ</sup>Ishhāq and Ya<sup>وَ</sup>qūb: all (of them) We guided:  
and before him, We guided Nūḥ, and among his progeny,  
Dāwūd, Sulaymān, <sup>وَ</sup>Ayyūb, Yūsuf, Mūsā, and Hārūn:  
thus do We reward those who do good:

And Zakariyyā and Yahyā, and <sup>وَ</sup>Isā and <sup>وَ</sup>Ilāya<sup>وَ</sup>a:  
all in the ranks of the righteous:

And <sup>وَ</sup>Ismā<sup>وَ</sup>il and <sup>وَ</sup>Ilāya<sup>وَ</sup>a and Yūnusa, and Lūṭ:  
and to all We gave favour above the nations:

(To them) and to their fathers, and progeny and brethren:  
We chose them, and We guided them to a straight Way.

This is the Guidance of Allāh:

He gives that guidance to whom He pleases, of His worshippers.  
(Sūratu-l-<sup>وَ</sup>An<sup>وَ</sup>am 6:84-88)

وَلَوْ أَشِنُّوكُمْ بَعْدَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

wa law °ashrakū lahabita °anhum mā kānū ya°malūn

If they had associated others with Him,  
nothing they did would have been of any use.

(Sūratu-l-An°am 6:88)

Thus, every Book or Scripture was given to the Prophets from the progeny of °Ibrāhīm ﷺ. From °Ishāq ﷺ, his second son, came the Prophets of Bani Israel and their progeny ending with °Isā ﷺ. From °Ismā°il ﷺ, his first born, came only one Prophet, the first among them and the seal of them all — Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.



So far as the last days of °Ibrāhīm ﷺ go we again are dependent of the narrative in the book of Genesis in the Torah.

In Genesis 23 we are told that Sarah died when she was 127 and after that °Ibrāhīm ﷺ took another wife. So far as Hajar goes we know from Islamic exegesis that she had died before °Ibrāhīm ﷺ had come to Makkah to rebuild the Ka°bah with °Ismā°il ﷺ.

Again, according to Genesis, “Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah...while he was still living he sent them away from his second born son Isaac, (°Ishāq ﷺ) eastward to the east country.” (Genesis 25:1–6) and in Genesis 25 7–8 we read:

וְאֶלְהָ יְמִינֵי שְׁנִי – חִי אֲבָרָהָם אֲשֶׁר –  
חִי מֵאַת שָׁנָה וּשְׁבעִים שָׁנָה וּחֲמֹשׁ שָׁנִים:  
וַיָּגֹעַ עִימָת אֲבָרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקָן וּשְׁבָעַ וַיָּאָסֶף אֶל – עַמּוֹי:

7 Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. 8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

What to this writer, whose first Shaykh, °Abdu-r-Rahmān ash-Sharif ﷺ lived in al-Khalil (Hebron) where °Ibrāhīm ﷺ found his final resting place in the Cave of Machpelah along with °Ishāq, Ya°qūb ﷺ and their wives, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, is so amazing is that, in the research that I did in preparing this talk, I discovered that both °Ismā°il ﷺ and °Ishāq ﷺ came together in the end to bury their father °Ibrāhīm ﷺ together.

Finding this out has given me great hope that one of the central problems of our time, which is the on-going struggle in the Holy Land, may yet have a possible outcome of reconciliation and peace. I first went to the Holy Land in 1969 just after the '68 war in which al-Quds ash-Sharīf (Yerushalayim or Jerusalem) had been conquered and occupied by the Israeli army. I went there as a young man coming out of an intensely Christian (Roman Catholic to be precise) background who had lost his faith in Christianity over the impossible conundrum of the Trinity and was, at that time, more or less a spiritual seeker who had, by the Grace of Allāh ﷺ, been given a contract to produce a coffee table book on "The Old City" which was attracting a lot of interest at that time, having been as they said at the time, "recently liberated."

Truthfully my knowledge of the city and the Holy Land came purely as a result of my early Christian upbringing which, unusually for a Catholic, involved a lot of Bible reading and study. Indeed I had first learned to read in English by reading the Bible when my grandmother, may Allāh ﷺ grant her rest, tired of telling me stories, taught me my ABC's using as a text book a big old illustrated Bible that 'lived' in a place of honor in our country home.

Prior to my journey to the Holy Land, as a spiritual seeker I had travelled quite extensively including jaunts along the hippie trail in India and elsewhere in the East. I was blessed to come under the aegis of a number of spiritual teachers from my teen age years on, the last of whom advised me, if I wanted to really progress on the spiritual path, I should go to the Holy Land where all the monotheistic faiths had found their home. I say "monotheistic" as my travels in India, interesting though they were, had made quite clear to me that I was not cut out to be a worshipper of the many gods and goddesses who I came across in my travels in the East though I enjoyed the color, the sanctity and hospitality of the people and the beautiful bajans and qawwali (قُواليٰ/क. व्वाली) I heard in India.

I brought together a team of graphic artists, photographers, designers, ethnographers etc to provide the content for the book, but aside from graphically documenting the "Old City" a large part of our work consisted of conducting interviews with various political, religious and spiritual figures from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities who then all existed side by side in the Old City.

(I have described this quite fully in the first parts of my memoirs, "Exile" which was published privately in the early 1990's and is available in a limited hand bound edition from Noon Hieographers.)

Among the people we interviewed were a number of Muslim Sūfī Shuyukh from whom I first began to learn the true path of Sūfism (though in my earlier days of searching I had been exposed to various heterodox ‘sūfi’ groups such as those who gathered around Meher Baba, Sam Lewis and Vilayat Khan). One shaykh among those who we interviewed, Shaykh Muhammad al-Jamal, has remained a dear friend of mine and source of inspiration over these past forty years.

There was, however, one shaykh, <sup>10</sup>Abdu-r-Rahman ash-Sharīf ﷺ, in particular whom we met in al-Khalīl (Hebron) the city that the reader will recognize as the final resting place of <sup>11</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ, <sup>12</sup>Ishāq and Ya‘qūb ﷺ as well as many of their wives.

The shaykh who was over a hundred years old at the time of our meeting, struck a very deep chord in my being and shortly after I made my shahadah in the Islamic school (*madrasah*) in the Haram ash-Sharīf at al-Aqsa in al-Quds, I entered into bay‘at with him.

His main advice to me, at the time, was to stop my research into Sufism and attempts at being a Sūfī and instead study <sup>13</sup>Islam as I was putting the cart before the horse and I was in need of grounding in <sup>14</sup>Islām which was the real basis of Sufism which could not rightfully be understood without a solid grounding in <sup>14</sup>Islām.

His advice led me to study, first at the *Markaz al-Lughatu-l-‘Arabiyyah*, a branch of the College of Shari‘ah in Makkah and then with the man, Dr. <sup>15</sup>Ibrāhīm al-Baṭawī, who became my shaykh after the death, Allāh have mercy on him, of my first shaykh in al-Khalil. Shaykh <sup>16</sup>Ibrāhīm was Professor of foreign students at the al-Azhar in Cairo (*al-Qahirah*) and he took me under his wing and since I have had the honor of becoming his khalifah or representative in the western hemisphere and now, successor. He has passed away some three years ago now and I ask the Mercy of Allāh upon him.

In a sense most of the above is by way of background and not exactly to the point which I really want to address, which is the ongoing situation of terror in the Holy Land that has prevailed from the beginning of the British Mandate in 1920 but more openly and heartlessly from the time of the 1968 war to the overt racist aggression of the present, especially after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1994, when the Zionist government under the protection of its arch-ally, the successive American governments (Republican or Democratic) callously disregarded international law regarding the expropriation of Palestinian land and the unchecked expansion of settlements contrary to International law and UN resolutions from Resolution 181 of November 1948 to R.1648 of December 2005.

All of this expropriation and expansion of the Zionist state is based on the Balfour Declaration (dated 2 November 1917) which was a letter from the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland in which we find the following:

“His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...”

and of deeper significance than that political statement is the twisting of the words of the Lord to ’Ibrāhīm ﷺ in Genseis

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם אַתָּה אֲחֵרִי הַפְּرָד – לֹוט מַעֲמֹן שָׂא נָא עַיְנִי וּרְאָה מַן – הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר – אַתָּה שָׁם צִפְנָה וְנִגְבָּה וְקִדְמָה וְיִמְהָ – בַּיְתָה – בְּלָ – הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר – אַתָּה רָאָה לֹךְ אֶתְנָנָה וְלֹצְרָעֵד עַד – עַולְםָ: וְשִׁמְתִּי אֶת – זְרֻעָן בְּעֵפֶר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַם – יִצְכֵל אִישׁ לְמִנּוֹת אֶת – עַפְרֵה הָאָרֶץ גַּם – זְרֻעָן יִמְנָה: קָום הַתְּהִלָּךְ בָּאָרֶץ לְאַרְכָּה זְלִיחָבָה בַּיְתָה אֶתְנָנָה: (Genesis 13: 14-17)

“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, *I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.* (ital added) I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”

What the Zionists did and continue to do is to misread the words of G-d in Genesis *I will give it to you and to your descendants forever* to mean *Jews only*, as though ’Ismā’īl ﷺ was not a descendent of ’Ibrāhīm ﷺ. In fact ’Ismā’īl ﷺ was the first born son of ’Ibrāhīm ﷺ and so by the laws of primogeniture he has an even greater claim on the lands than his younger half brother, ’Ishāq ﷺ.

The law of primogeniture is the rule in the law of inheritance through which the oldest male child has the right to succeed to the estate of an ancestor to the exclusion of younger siblings, both male and female, as well as all other relatives.

So it is quite clear that, in spite of the repeated Zionist claims to the land, in fact they have no real claim, not that that really matters as long as the Government of the self-proclaimed state of Israel is backed by the military and diplomatic might of the United States just as earlier it was backed by the United Kingdom but, in reality, it is trumped by the law of the jungle which is “might makes right”.

I mentioned earlier that in doing the research for this *bayan* I was, at least, momentarily inspired by a thin ray of hope when I read that both <sup>9</sup>Ismā'īl ﷺ and <sup>9</sup>Ishāq ﷺ had cooperated together in burying their father, <sup>9</sup>Ibrāhīm ﷺ.

When I was involved in working on the book on the Old City (which by the way was never published as the well known New York publisher felt that it was “one sided” and “prejudiced” meaning that the Palestinian, both Muslim and Christian, perspectives were given equal weight with the Jewish and Zionist perspectives) I had the opportunity to travel fairly widely throughout all of the Holy Land in a way that is no longer possible due to ethnic purely racist road blocks and the infamous Wall of Shame.

(As an aside I remember when President Regan visited Berlin and said, “Mr Kruschev take down your wall!” I doubt we will see any president of the United States tell Bibi to “Take down your wall!”)

In any case as I travelled throughout the land conducting interviews with Jews, Christians and Muslims, secular, religious, and spiritual I heard over and over again from people that they had spent their entire lives living together and, for the most part, had managed to tolerate each other if not actually enjoy each others company.

This is a bit the way that many people in India, Hindoo and Muslim alike, speak of pre-partition India.

About the only group of people I interviewed who did not share that way of thought were those people, mainly European and American, who identified themselves as “Zionists”. And oddly enough many of those people when pressed during the interview had little or no real contact with Palestinians either Muslim or Christian.

In fact I remember a rather liberal girl from East Jerusalem of European parentage who had grown up there who, when one of the ladies who was working with us suggested she visit us at our house on the Mount of Olives, confessed she had never been on the West Bank and was terrified of the mere thought of visiting us there.

At the time I was much younger and, in retrospect, rather naive and, in fact, really knew rather little about Zionism and its roots.

I continued in that mode until the time, mentioned earlier, when we brought our more or less finished book on the Old City to the NY publisher. He first looked at the many photograph and photographic portraits of the inhabitants of the Old City and seemed rather positive about the whole thing and asked us to leave it with him for a few days so he and his colleagues might look at it “in depth”.

A few days turned into the next morning when I was asked to come and meet with our editor who told me straight out in very simple words that they could not consider publishing such a one-sided and prejudiced book and, further, he doubted that any publisher in NY would consider publishing it either.

As I have said, I was naive, for now I would know that such a project was impossible and doomed to failure from the very “git go.”

One positive result though was that I was inspired to really try to really understand the historical roots and objectives of Zionism and its influence not only on the Holy Land but on the land of my birth.

I found that the Zionist movement was founded in the late 19th century by secular Jews, largely as a response by *Ashkenazi* (European and Slavic) Jews to rising antisemitism in Europe, exemplified by the Dreyfus affair in France and the Anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire. The political movement was formally established by an Austro-Hungarian journalist Theodor Herzl, in 1897 following the publication of his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) and at that time, the movement sought to encourage European Jewish migration to then Ottoman Palestine.

Zionism, as such, is a form of Jewish nationalism that supports the creation of a Jewish nation state in the territory defined as the Land of Israel. Zionism supports Jews upholding their Jewish identity, opposes the assimilation of Jews into other societies and has advocated the return of Jews to Israel as a means for Jews to be a majority in their own nation, and so to be liberated from antisemitic discrimination, exclusion, and persecution that has historically occurred in the diaspora.

All of which sounds reasonable until you look more closely at two points in the above:

1: the movement sought to encourage European Jewish migration to the then Ottoman Palestine.

2: (Zionism) supports the creation of a Jewish nation state in the territory it alone defines as “the Land of Israel”.

The problem then arises as to who was living in “Ottoman Palestine” and what is “the territory defined as the Land of Israel.”

The first clear use of the term Palestine to refer to the entire area between Phoenicia and Egypt was in 5th century BC Ancient Greece. Herodotus wrote of a “district of Syria, called *Palaistinē* in *The Histories*”, the first historical work clearly defining the region, which included the Judean mountains and the Jordan Rift Valley.

The land called Palestine (فلسطين) is situated at a strategic location between Egypt, Syria and Arabia, and is the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity. The region has a long and tumultuous history as a crossroads for religion, culture, commerce, and politics. The region has been controlled by numerous different peoples, including Ancient Egyptians, Canaanites, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Ancient Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, the Sunni Arab Caliphates, the Shi'ah Fatimid Caliphate, Crusaders, Ayyubids, Mameluks, Ottomans, the British and modern Israelis and present day Palestinians. Modern archaeologists and historians of the region refer to their field of study as *Syro-Palestinian* archaeology.

Obviously a polyglot world of many and diverse peoples and one in which only one of those many people who lived in it or governed it at any one time were Jews, and not a land which could in any way thought to be the exclusive property of Jews or Bani Israel.

This was definitely not the land which Golda Meir referred to as “A land without people for a people without land.” The last part of her statement rang true for European Jewery but certainly not the first part. It was also widely represented as a barren land which young energetic zionists would come and make “to bloom” whereas in fact the Agricultural Faculty of UCLA at Davis account the costal lands of Palestine to be among the most fertile in the world surpassing even the Central Valley of California, which it somewhat resembles in terms of climate etc. So...so much for the great Zionist myth of making the desert green and causing it to bloom.

As I studied more about the whole subject, including, importantly, the economics of Zionism especially in relation to the funding of the first world war, I found that really what we are dealing with here is a massive land grab by European Jews who, admittedly, did suffer unjust prejudicial treatment, persecution and discrimination but, in their quest for a Jewish homeland with the backing of first the British and later the Americans, wound up meting out similar unjust prejudicial treatment, persecution and discrimination on the indigineous Palestinian population to the point where the Holy Land is anything but, and if anything, most closely resembles South Africa during the time of *apartheid* or the post Civil War American south.

And if the reader/listener might think such talk is prejudicial Muslim propaganda, I would refer the reader to the words and thought of Bishop Desmond Tutu or President Jimmy Carter or the Jewish professor Norman Finkelstein whose visit to the West Bank changed his life or the cognitive scientist, Noam Chomsky.

Allāh ﷺ orderes Bani Israel in Leviticus: “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your G-d.”

בָּאֶזְרָח מִפְּנֵי יְהֹוָה לְכָם הַגָּר אֲתֶלְכָם וְאַהֲבָתָה לֹא בָּמָוֹךְ כִּי־  
גָּרִים הַיִּתְּמִם בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲנָן יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (Leviticus 19:34)

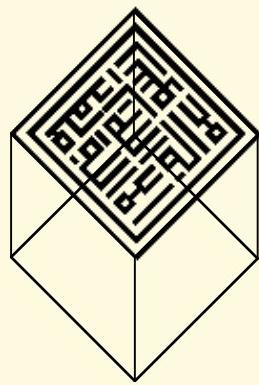
It would seem that if that order of Allāh ﷺ were to be followed then there would be some possiblity that Holy might again find itself joined with the land and it might truly be a Holy Land or, as it is called in Arabic, al-◦Ardu-l-Muqaddasah (الارض المقدسة).



Pray for Peace and Justice and Mercy and Love and Freedom  
in the  
Holy Land



ن



noon hierographers

green mountain

virginia

usa